Foxiana

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*FOXIANA*

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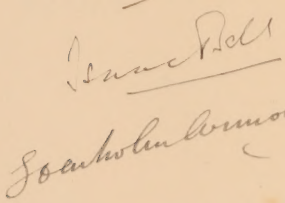

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By

ISAAC BELL, M.F.H.

With Plates by

G. D. ARMOUR

1929

LONDON

COUNTRY LIFE LTD

20 TAVISTOCK STREET W.C. 2

NEW YORK: CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

Frontispiece

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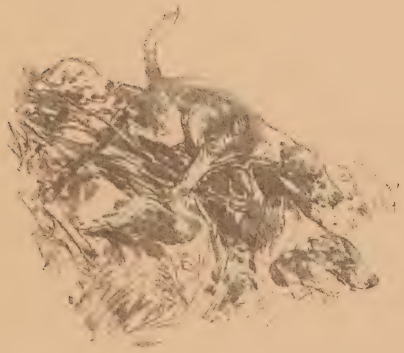

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PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

# Dedication

THIS book is dedicated to the Huntsmen of Great Britain. Peter Beckford described a good huntsman as follows :

" He should be young, strong, active, bold and enterprising, fond of the diversion and intelligent in the pursuit of it : he should be sensible and good tempered : he ought also to be sober : he should be exact, civil and cleanly : he should be a good horseman and a good groom : his voice should be strong and clear : and he should have an eye so quick as to perceive which of his hounds carries the scent when running, and have so excellent an ear as always to distinguish the foremost hounds when he does not see them : he should be quiet, patient and without conceit.

Such are the excellences which constitute a good huntsman :

He should not, however, be too fond of displaying them till necessity calls them forth : he should let his hounds alone whilst they *can hunt* and he should have genius to assist them *when they cannot.*"

From *Thoughts upon Hunting*, Letter IX., by PETER BECKFORD.

If I were presumptuous enough to add to this, I would write—" He should be possessed of a good sense of humour." But, on second thoughts, I see why the great Peter deemed it unnecessary to add this sense of humour—for I have never yet met a huntsman who lacked it !

I. BELL.

# Foreword

SLUGGARDS may go to the Ant (and consider her ways and be wise), but the rest of us, seeking wisdom and understanding of Foxhunting, may prefer to go for that to a man who began to be Master of Hounds a quarter of a century ago. Such is the author of this book —a book dedicated to Huntsmen of Great Britain. "Sense of Humour" is the Author's addition to Peter Beckford's famous requirements of a huntsman : and sense of humour, quick thinking, discernment—these, with sympathy, and love for and understanding of the Foxhound, must have been required, I should think, to carry a Master through the changing times of the past twenty-five years of Foxhunting. As to the book itself, the author's profits on it are to go, I learn, to the Hunt Servants Benefit Society. In days when so many of us are seeking wisdom and understanding of Foxhunting, Hunt Servants will not be the only ones to benefit by this book of FOXIANA.

CRASCREDO.

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# A Hunting Day

LOOKS a rare sort of day. Bet there's a scent. Coming along hounds were raking on, determined looking, and their mouths shut tight. Never saw the thorn look blacker. Everything smelling so strong. See how the smoke hangs. I can smell the Colonel's cigar from across the road.

Let's move hounds away from the exhausts of these motors. It makes them sneeze—gets into their coats and all helps to foil scent. I can smell that iodoform. That's where I dressed Caroline's cut foot. Forgot to wash it off this morning. We want no other scent with us than "Fox." I do hate the smell of bath salts and hair wash. Delicate organ a hound's nose, can't be too careful.

Blackthorne Gorse the first draw. What a good day it is to "hear." Listen to the clatter of the horses on the stony lane! The slamming of that gate. The barking of that collie. *And* that man driving cattle. Pity our first covert's down-wind of it all!

* * * * * * * *

Nip on, Jack, and sharp too! The old customer may hear us and steal away. I've a jolly good mind to hold them round the covert before putting in, in case he's hooked it. . . . No, I shan't. . . . There are several foxes in the thorns, and if the old customer has slipped away he is not the sort that will let us work up to him and fresh find him in some other covert. No, he's perpetual motion. Like the tide, "waits for no man." It would be a stern chase all day.

Nothing like getting away on his brush, and hustle him from the start. That's the first thing towards killing him. Next comes hitting him off quick at the first check. Never let 'em get their second wind. The nearer you stay to your fox the better the scent, and if he is blowing you get a "breath scent" as well as the body and pad scent. So it's

hustle him along. The final act is brought about by the sagacity of your older hounds running harder when they recognise the weakening scent of a sinking fox and by the help the horsemen give you, if they keep well off hounds ; and by allowing no noise or row in the establishment. Those are my ideas on the matter. Sounds easy. But here we are outside the covert.

* * * * * * * *

*No, my lasses !* Keen as you are, not one of you must be off into covert before I tip you the wink. *Leu-in !* How the covert fence crackles as they jump on and off ! I suppose a pack weighs nearly a ton. Anyhow, last week when I was half up that hole trying to get hold of the fox the hounds got suddenly excited and jumped down on the top of me. Like a cart-load of bricks. My back, I can feel it still.

*What's that speaking ?* Only young Lightning. Rabbit, probably. *Ware riot, Lightning !* Have a care ! She's a high mettled young bitch. Shan't say too much to her. Besides, she'll very likely help to put the fox up by her row. *It's done it, too.* Just as I said. But he jumped up just where Lightning was speaking, so she was right. I am sorry I chided her. However she'll forgive me—and I've learnt that she's got an uncommon good nose in brambles. *Huic, huic, huic at him !* They're all round him. What a chorus ! By Jove they're out of covert.

But Jack is there and he would have viewed him away ? No, that's it. He's turned up inside the covert fence and they have flashed out down-wind on his scent, which has blown out. Steadee, Jack ! Don't rate 'em back, let 'em make their swing by themselves ; the fox is inside and they'll be back on to him like a knife if you leave 'em alone. Much better let 'em do it for themselves—and get the experience. *Garneawuuay ! !*—At the far end. Well it's a flying start this time, for I've got hold of them before they got back into the gorse.

Must be careful now. No " bad hurry," but nip down with them well before me a little to one side, and my horse up-wind of them on the

*How the covert fence crackles as they jump on and off !*

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How the covert fence crackles as they jump on and off!

covert side—and then come down onto the line almost parallel with it. Nothing looks more ridiculous than striking it " heel." It's often done by the hounds behind your horse—specially if there's a heavy tongued one among 'em.

Where's my second whipper-in ? Now, Bill, they're " all on ! " But don't get forrard. This fox looks like a cub—and a ringer probably. So stay about here for a while, and if he doubles back later through the horse foil and if I'm not on his line—just give *one* halloa. See him to the covert and then nip on in case you see him through. Don't put me on another, however. You've had a good look at him and should recognise him a year hence even in the Zoo. *Forrard, forrard !*

Blow these cattle ! It's checked them. However, I prefer cattle to sheep foil. Hounds can drive through cattle further *and* give one a better " direction " where to get out on the clean ground and hit it quick—especially if there's a bit of a breeze. *Yooi bitches forrard !* Not a head up all through this check. Trying all the time. They think they did it all themselves, too—bless 'em. Never noticed me just inclining them out of the field.

What a head they are carrying. Watch Gossamer. Hope she is not getting a bit stingy with her tongue. No, she's all right, thank goodness. She was just a bit wide of the line and driving back into the wind. She's got it now. *Hark forrard to Gossamer.* What a lovely tongue! By Jove, it's a cracker. Glad I'm on a good horse. Pancake is dropping back. It's those two days " in " with a cut foot has done that. She's always been our top bitch. Just shows what " condition " means. Jezebel has dropped back. Never thought she *would* do it when the " tap was turned full on." It's those shoulders—and those over-knuckling knees. It's a pity, for her heart is as brave as a lion's. She was first prize bitch—and the Captain says to me, " Walter," he says, " when you can draw twenty couples like this you'll be a proud man." " Not so sure about *that*," I says. " I'll tell you how she goes on after

Christmas. There's some items in her conformation I don't quite like. I won't say what they are, because I fancy it's those items made you give her first prize, Captain—and you might be annoyed with me." A good job for me and a bad job for the foxes we ain't got a pack all of the sort the Captain likes ! They're all right eight days out of ten, but it's when you meet the real scent, breast high, that these young nippy ladies of ours run the other sort clean off their legs. Sort of flummox 'em—outclass them. It's like running a hunter at Ascot, to put Gossamer with that lot. In her own class she'd be a star turn.

Spinster's at head now. Did you notice the sprint she put in to get there ? How they chaffed me for keeping her from going in the draft ! She was light and plain at the knees. But I kept her, for she was out of Susan, who was out of Sunfish, out of Sunday, out of Susie, who was by our Sultan, who was by Brocklesby Wrangler out of old Sinuous, who went slap back to Squire Chaplin's Blankney lot—and of course back to Lord Henry's. Somehow they never seem to throw 'em with much bone, and several visitors last year said to me, " Walter, if you want to get a nice pack get out of that sort." But, bless you, they never seem to wear out. No trouble in kennel or in the field ; all you want is a jolly good horse to see 'em dust their fox along.

Here's the turnpike. It's checked 'em right enough, but they are trying hard. We came at it on a right-hand slant—so it's ten-to-one that where he has crossed out is to the right of where he got in. It's usually a cert, I find. Not much chance of a good hit on a road these days—what with motor car foil and tarmac—so while the leaders are driving down the road I'll just slip these five couple or so out under these rails, and they can be trying on the grass while the others are driving down the road. They've got it! *Forrard, forrard.* Not much time wasted so far! We've been dusting him along exactly 38 minutes by the watch—watch they gave me when I left the Bleakshire for here, by the way.

* * * * * * * *

Must have been nearly ten minutes in these roots. Yes, sir. Thank you, sir, I saw that fox go away, all right. But it's been so dry that I shouldn't be surprised if there are several foxes here ; and I don't want to change if I can help. *Whooohoopwhoop !* A good job I let 'em hunt the line and didn't lift 'em. Tragic nailed him in the roots. Fairly bust up with the pace, he must have been. It was a fresh one went away.

* * * * * * * *

Been a rare good day. Caught a brace fair and square. I didn't let on that one of 'em had a snare on him. Not for myself, but I do like my hounds to get all the credit they can. Hope the Master don't pinch the new horse for her Ladyship ! He's a topper. What a bitch that Spinster is, to be sure. Must get a good litter out of her in our best walks. Hope she don't come around until April. I like to hunt her all I can. What a help she is, always tells me which way he's gone. What shall I put her to ? He's a nice dog that Huntshire Vincent, to be sure. I must work out his pedigree to see he has none of that Coldcream Loafer blood in him. It's bad stuff. Often see a good one by him, but the soft strain is bound to come out some day. It's like a bad gas, must come out, I say. So I don't want to bottle any of that sort. I wonder if Vincent's a real " out and outer ? " Spinster's note's inclined to be a bit squeaky, so we must put her to a heavy tongued line. So many of these so-called " Stallion Hounds " can't go fast enough to keep warm. Fancy how I'd kick myself if through careless mating I got a litter of Spinsters that couldn't go the pace. Such a waste of a good bitch's litter to be sure. Dash it all, I think I'll put her to our Bluster. Six years old, but he still leads our dogs and he has helped me get hold of many a fox I would have otherwise lost. Of course they won't be " beauties." But what of it ? What's a quid or two more in summer for kennel visits ? What's a few ten shillings in stud fees ? I get a good wage here, and after all what's a day like to-day worth to a man ?

# A Genius

" I OFTEN think," said young Flasher, " that you staid old hounds are a bit slow in the uptake. This is only my first season, yet I've quite got the hang of things already."

" You *will* get the ' hang ' all right, if you're not careful," growled Shamrock ; " but pray proceed to tell us your theories, my young genius."

" Well, for one thing," said Flasher, " you all get yourselves very much scratched and punished working hard as you do in the thick thorn coverts of this country. Now my method is to save myself as much as possible. Reserve my strength and speed for a brilliant effort or to bring off a ' star turn ' which will earn for me a cheer. While you are all bursting your way through the tangled undergrowth, working your fox, I keep among the thin stuff without fatigue—and by staying within hearing of your voices, I always know the direction in which you are hunting. Then I ' try on ' before you, and as often as not strike the scent and lead the pack. Somehow I seem usually to be able to guess the exact spot to go to."

" You ' guess ' as freely as an American," answered Shamrock ; " but don't let me interrupt you. Attaboy ! "

" You may sneer at me," said Flasher, " but you must acknowledge I am as often as not in front of you. Why, it was only yesterday, I heard Tom say, ' Somehow or other when I do see young Flasher he is always bang at the top.' "

" Yes," remarked Shamrock dryly, " it is a thundering good job for you that Tom *doesn't* see you when he doesn't."

" Now you're talking Irish, my well-christened friend," retorted the nimble-witted Flasher, getting his own back. " But allow me to continue without interruption. When the fox runs a ride, and then

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turns off into the thick covert, I make it a point to stick to the rides as long as I can do so. Galloping easily along, parallel to you, I look out as I pass the cross rides. Often I see the fox—and then I throw myself straight in after his brush and make the welkin ring with my voice. For I am no rogue, mark you."

" I cannot endorse that statement," said the old hound. " If ever I saw a neck more deserving of a rope necklace than yours, I will gladly forego a week's pudding."

" Another thing," continued Flasher, not one whit abashed, " when we are running along the hills—on coming to a check—I make my first swing *uphill*, quite regardless of what you old wiseheads are doing. It is evident that if I succeed in hitting my fox I get a clear lead, and, being uphill of you all, I shall hold it. But on the other hand, should the pack carry the line down the hill, it is easy work for me (with my well laid on shoulders) to swoop down at an angle on you and get well in front. The only time I ever go into really thick covert is when I have chopped a succulent rabbit and want to feast in peace. Then I carry in my prize, taking precaution not to be noticed by any of you. It is the other hounds who give the show away to the hunt servants—when they come up and try to steal my rabbit and thereby kick up a row. But even then the whippers-in usually slip it into the thieves and fail to notice me curled up and concealed in the brambles.

" The reason most of you hounds are jealous of me is that I am so much admired. All last summer people would call at the kennels and say to Tom, ' Let's have a look at Flasher.' And I would look at them as if to say, ' Watch me next season show some of these old grey muzzles a thing or two ! ' Take last Monday, when you came to a check after taking the line down that dusty road. I had been watching carefully how you did it—running by fits and starts, swishing that old threadbare stern of yours. Up I came and mimicked you to a ' T ' and ran a good three hundred yards on further. You looked pretty sick, I remember,

but several of the field said, ' Look at Flasher. What a nose for a young dog ! He can own the line long after Shamrock is baffled ! ' "

* * * * * * * *

" Alas ! " sighed Shamrock, " I shall never instil in that young dog the true spirit of foxhunting, and all it stands for ! It is a pity. Well endowed with physical attributes, his mentality is amiss. He has got a kink or a yellow streak somewhere, probably owing to a bad ' throw-back.' Yet his immediate parents were two of the most honest fox-hounds I ever hunted with. They were both entered in my year. Somehow he can't grasp that we are not looking out for cushy jobs, but that we glory in taking on the rough without ever a thought of the smooth. That our hereditary doctrine is to help one another, by deed and word. That our one aim is to kill our fox through the staunchness of our pack, with no eye for individual kudos. That we wish to share triumph and fun with all. The more the merrier. You will often notice when a hound comes up after having missed the hunt, how we all scold at him. I have seen one badly bitten for it. The reason is that we look on it as a stigma to our kennel should a single hound be short, however severe the run.

" On the other hand you may have seen such hounds as Racer, Contest, Nimrod, Bailiff and myself, come up and rejoin the pack. When that happens it is we who do the growling and scolding. The reason then being that *we* were on the hunted fox (often we have killed him unknown to anyone), and that the pack had foolishly changed on to a fresh one, not heeding our cry, being tempted by a scent stronger and easier to hunt."

* * * * * * * *

" What's this you tell me, Nimrod, about young Flasher ? . . . Must have been that shot I heard this morning first thing ! I must say it doesn't come as a surprise. Been expecting it for some time. I suppose it was that ' hit ' of his on the road last Monday ? He went a bit *too* far ! He was a proper looking hound, but somehow I never liked those amber coloured eyes."

# Luck

"THERE is," said Joe, "a deal of luck in this life. Never struck it myself—but Jack, he's never stopped striking it. We started together in stables, as lads, Jack and I—and we both meant to become huntsmen before we were finished. Our Master had a roan hunter, a great favourite of his, one of the best that ever peeped through a bridle. For all that, he was a real brute in his stable : quiet enough when out with the hounds but a proper brute in his stable. We had been there some six months, when the man who "did" the roan got badly savaged. Jack offered to do the horse, and he used to spend hours and hours in the roan's box, coaxing and making friends with him. The result soon was that there was Jack with only one horse to look after (and the pride of the stable at that), while I was left to do four old plugs, which were ridden by the second whipper-in ! What about that for luck ?

"And as if that wasn't enough, the next season saw Jack put on as second horseman in livery, on account of him getting on so well with the Master's favourite. That March the 'flu' was about. The Master got sick, then down went the second whipper-in with it too. So Jack was second whipper-in in the field. One day, with a serving scent, finding an old travelling fox, hounds scored the hunt of the season—and of very many seasons, for that matter. After running some sixteen miles over a stiff country there was but one horse could stick it, and that, as anyone would guess who knew the horse, was the great roan (with Jack on his back). What about *that* for luck ?

"The next day the master sent for Jack to hear about the latter part of the run. 'I suppose,' he says, 'it's no use asking you the names of any hounds who distinguished themselves ? Being in the stable you'd hardly have any time to know them ? ' 'Well, sir,' says Jack,

' when they checked by Horton Hill, it was Nimrod took it across the footbridge over the river, speakin' to it beautifully. Then Challenger got to head, and held it until they were all brought to a check by the sheep on Mr. Hodges's farm. I think they'd have lost their fox if Banker hadn't puzzled it out and set them all going again up the hill. Here the fox was runnin' short, and I noticed three hounds—Warrior, Holocauste and Ravager—who had never been in the front all through, suddenly drive to head. And with hackles up one of 'em—one of 'em with a hoarse note (I couldn't catch which one)—— '

" ' That's Holocauste,' said the Squire, sitting bolt upright in his bed with excitement. ' Yes, Holocauste for a monkey ! When he winds his sinking fox—why, it makes me feel *goosey all over* even to hear about it. But go on, go on ! '

" ' Well, sir,' Jack tells him, ' the fox had turned short into some old grass on the headland, and the pack having overrun it were looking about all excited like, when back jumps little Crafty and kills him where he was lying.'

" ' *Well done, Crafty !* ' shouts the Squire. ' It's the old knack that Craftsman line has. *Whoo-hoop !* '

" But the holloa goes all husky and he starts coughing. ' Dash this influenza,' he says, ' it's the very devil ; catching me like this by the heels. How I should have liked to see Crafty pin that fox ! But how comes it that you know the names of so many hounds, seeing that you are in the stables ? '

" ' Well, sir,' Jack has to tell 'im, ' it's like this. Ever since the second kennelman left to go to the Lumbermore Hounds, Mr. Watchorn could never get his coat and tops cleaned to his liking. So I offered to do them for him in the evening, after I done my work. And I asked him if in return he'd let me walk out with the hounds on a Sunday afternoon, and teach me something about it. For, you see, sir,' 'e says, ' my greatest ambition is to be a huntservant.'

" ' *And so you shall be*,' says the master. ' My second whipper-in is going as first to the Duke next season, and I'll put you on in his stead. For I like a keen lad even if he has no experience. If you are keen you will soon learn under Watchorn. No better performer—was brought up under my father, and my father taught us both.'

" Well, what about that? Who says Jack ain't lucky? A full-blown second whipper-in, while there was I still strapping horses!

" But that wasn't all. In another two seasons Jack was first whipper-in, our own first having gone as huntsman to the Lumbermore. Then old Watchorn got a bad fall, and Jack carried the horn while he was laid up—nearly all that season. Of course, his usual luck sticks. There'd been a lot of rain, the drains were all full and foxes didn't get to ground. With a good scent Jack handled a great number of foxes after good runs ; and his hounds, of course, worked beautifully for him on that account. What happens then? Why, one day our Master sends for him and tells him that Sir Lavish Longpurse has written to ask could he offer Jack his situation as hunstman?" Joe paused. " I don't mind a fellow havin' all the luck," he said—" what hurts me is to see him throw it away. Jack said he wished to thank the Squire and Sir Lavish, but that he thought he'd not had enough experience. He liked the place he was in, he said, and he felt he couldn't do better than remain and learn under Mr. Watchorn. Besides, he said, he was so fond of the hounds it would break his heart to leave them—with him looking forward to see the first lot of puppies by Holocauste enter to the sport next season.

" But Jack has struck it lucky to the very end. That was two seasons ago and now Watchorn's getting old. He's sixty or more and he's resigning—taking the *Fox and Hounds* in the village. When he goes to the Squire about resigning, ' I don't know, sir,' he says, ' if you have in your mind anyone as my successor, but if I may venture a suggestion, I think that Jack'd do it better than any servant I know of. He knows

my ways (and those are your ways, sir, for you've taught me all I know). He knows the country—and he loves the hounds. I don't think you'd get a better.'

"Well, I ask you! Did you ever hear of luck like that? Huntsman at thirty to the best pack of hounds in these parts! And here am I (what some have thought the better man of the two) still strapping horses."

# Solving a Riddle

YOUNG WILLIE SAPLING had taken over the mastership of the X.Y.Z. Some will tell you that the X.Y.Z. is one of the oldest hunts in the kingdom. I don't know about that, but it is quite ancient in contrast with Willie.

The X.Y.Z. was suffering from dry rot, while the sap in Willie was as green as his favourite liqueur. Willie was one of the very newest things in the way of M.F.H's. Everything about him was new—his ideas, his clothes, even to his father's title, which was even newer than his money, which was also really quite new.

On taking over the mastership Willie was advised by his friends that he must equip himself with a private secretary, who would keep his correspondence up to date, type his letters, file his bills and receipts, and make memorandums. Willie quite realised that his mail bag as M.F.H. would differ considerably from what he was in the habit of receiving. Up to now his usual post had brought him a letter from one of his numerous relations, a comic note or postcard from Lucy Lightfoot or Tilly Twinkle, a few bills from an enraged tailor, a mad hatter or a bootmaker up a tree, a " chit " from a restaurant and a circular from a philanthropic moneylender—not to mention numerous prospectuses regarding shares in embryo racing schemes, which promised 100 per cent. on invested capital. All these had been easily dealt with. Now it would be a different matter.

One thing Willie was determined upon, and that was the *sort* of secretary he wanted. No, he wouldn't have a man like the elderly secretary of his old uncle, General Gunns, M.F.H., of the Downham-quicks. He wouldn't have a man at all. If Willie engaged a man to do his work he might suddenly discover that the man was a colonel with thirty years' service, and Willie felt that he would never be able to give

orders to a man like that, for, after all, Willie was but a post-war junior subaltern (retired). But he certainly wouldn't have a dismal looking female secretary like the one of Sir Gray Tombs, M.F.H. of the Dreery Hounds. It would depress him to see her on a fine hunting morning. Willie was perhaps a trifle temperamental.

What he required was a bright, young, and tactful girl—who would type his letters and take a lot of work off his hands, while he got all the hunting he could put in. Willie's sister wrote to him that she had found just the right person. She had but one fault—and that she couldn't help. Her name was Valerienne Mirabelle. But she had agreed to answer to the easier name of Miss Smith.

Now I am sorry to disappoint you, but I might just as well tell you at once that this story is not going to be at all what you think it will be. Miss Smith was not that sort of girl and Willie was just a real nice boy.

It was the last week of October, and Willie, wanting to publish his meets for November, sent for his Secretary.

" Have you any correspondence that might affect my November meets, Miss Smith ? " he asked, in what he felt was a good brisk businesslike way.

" I have quite a number, sir," said Miss Smith, " In the first place there is a letter marked ' urgent.' It is from the Mayor, asking you not to open the season on the first Monday in November, which has always been the custom, as the town are holding the pageant on that day, and most of the members and subscribers of this hunt are taking part in it, as well as their horses. On Tuesday, of course, you are down for opening the Poultry Show—and a speech. It is already advertised and you can't get out of it. Wednesday is the market. The X.Y.Z. Hounds have never met on that date ; it would be quite impossible and unheard of. On Thursday our neighbours, the Westwold, meet close here. So many of our subscribers are members of the Westwold that it would cause a considerable amount of controversy if you hunted on that day.

Friday would have been quite all right if it hadn't been for the big auction at Redbrick Castle. I have numerous letters from hunting folk, landowners and farmers asking you not to hunt that day as they must attend the sale, and couldn't come out. Saturday, as you know, is the Steeple-Chase meeting. At 2.30 the Adjacent Hunts Race is run for your cup. You will have to attend. You are a steward and also on the committee. Here are the badges. Besides on that day no one in these parts ever thinks of hunting."

"But that dishes all hunting for the whole of the first week of November," Willie pointed out. "Well, don't let's get downhearted. What about the following Monday?"

"The Bollinger Club," said Miss Smith, "are holding their sports that day. Half the proceeds are going to the poultry and wire fund. You are down to judge the sack race, the long jump, and also the table decorations—the latter event in conjunction with Lady Theodora Palm, of Palm Court. Her coverts are the best foxed in the whole country. But, of course, the big draw of the day is the tug-of-war between your staff and that of the Westwold Hunt. I must remind you that they expect you to send down six or seven horses to lend for the gymkhana—to people who have not brought their own and would like to compete in the events. You see, the ground there is a bit rough and many people hesitate to ride their own horses for fear of laming them. Now the following Tuesday would be absolutely right, ——"

"Hip, hip," cheered Willie, but too hastily.

"Unfortunately——"

"Good gracious! Then, when on earth will I ever be able to hunt again? By the bye, have you had letters about any shooting arrangements which might interfere with hunting?"

"Oh, heaps," said Miss Smith gaily. She produced a large sheaf of documents, all arranged alphabetically, from a pigeon hole labelled 'Shooting.'

" To begin with," she went on in her soothing voice, " Sir Arquebus Trigger wishes you to understand that he does not want hounds to draw or run into his coverts until February—for fear of disturbing the game."

" That's a nice slice out of the country," grumbled Willie—" Some ten thousand acres. But never mind."

" Major Loader," continued Miss Smith, " wants you to hunt his coverts without fail yesterday."

" Yesterday ? Why, the man's balmy ! "

" I must tell you," purred Miss Smith, quite unruffled, " I must tell you that I got a telephone call from the butler this morning, saying that he hoped the letter from the Major was not important, for he regretted to say that he had put it in his pocket and forgotten it for over a week. . . . Then Sir Theobald writes that he will be delighted for you to hunt his coverts any time after November 2nd ; but that he must ask you not to go there after November 9th as he wishes to give them three weeks' quiet before he holds his second shoot."

" That's a washout," said Willie : " we've just worked out that we can't hunt *at all* until the 12th."

" There is a very *nice* letter from Mr. Dibble," continued Miss Smith. " He says he will help and support you in every possible way on his side of the country, but that he must ask you a small favour, and that is to hunt that side of the country on a Saturday. He explains that he has business at Branchester and is away all the week, and that if you can't see the way to hunt on Saturdays, it will only mean that he will give up hunting altogether and rear some birds.

" Now here is a letter from Mr. Welling—who lives opposite to Mr. Dibble. Mr. Welling writes : ' Hunt our country any day of the week except Saturday ; it has never been hunted on a Saturday and never should be. I am afraid if you hunt on a Saturday you will get everybody's back up down here, including my own. Saturday is the day we go to Tonkster. My daughters attend a dancing class at the Rooms.

My wife does her shopping then, for provisions are far cheaper there than here. And I take a fencing lesson at the gymnasium. My doctor tells me it is the only thing that will ever put my shoulder right which I hurt when moving the grand piano.' "

" Miss Smith," said Willie firmly, " telephone to Cook's. Tell them to reserve me a seat and a berth in the Blue Train to Monte Carlo. Reserve me a good room on the sea front at the Hotel de Paris. Tell my bankers to send on a letter of credit for me to the Banque Française, Monte. I am off for a month. I must have a change. Advertise six days a week ; we've plenty of hounds and horses. Do you follow, Miss S. ? Tell Watchorn to carry on. Every day and all day things will get better and better and better. Write to the Hunt Committee, tell them I am dangerously ill. Nostalgia, hysteria, neuralgia, hydrophobia, influenza—anything except D.Ts. Pull down the blinds. Bolt the doors. Cut off the telephone. Throw all letters and telegrams unopened straight into the fire as soon as they come. Take a holiday. Go to London, go anywhere you like, as long as you pay all wages as usual on Fridays, of course. So long."

By the end of November everyone was glad to see the young Master back in the saddle, looking wonderfully well, too, after his recent illness. Willie has no secretary now. Miss Smith is in business in London, where she reads of the doings of the X.Y.Z. Hounds in the Saturday edition of *Saddle and Martingale*. Willie does all his own letter writing and gets on famously. Occasionally he forgets to answer one, but then it is usually one of the sort that in the long run answers itself. He doesn't find it so difficult, after all, to run the X.Y.Z.

*N.B.*—Willie is nothing like as green as he looks. Miss Smith could tell you that all right.

# Kennel Dialogue

Between Capt. Catchem, M.F.H., and his First Whipper-in and K.H., Jack Hydes.
Time: Day after the Puppy Show.

CATCHEM: Well, Jack, let's go once more carefully through the draft to see we've not made any mistakes before we send 'em away.

HYDES: What about that dog Lounger, sir—now that he's taken second in the show?

CATCHEM: I like him less to-day than ever. He's mean to follow and split up, and doesn't give me the idea of being an active hound. He has a good neck, but those shoulders are not actually right. He looks propped up, so to speak.

HYDES: But he "meets me" beautifully and the judges said they'd never seen bigger bone and better knees; and he's right up on his toes without any biscuit.

CATCHEM: Yes, but that won't help him go any faster up or down these hills.

HYDES: Sir Nabob Pudding was here to-day, sir—and he said to me, when I showed him Lounger,—"Jack," he said, "you are getting into the right sort of hound. I shouldn't have been ashamed of breeding this fellow myself."

CATCHEM: I grant you all that, but he is not the sort I like. No doubt some will say I have drafted one of the best-looking dogs I ever bred, and on many points there's no doubt that he *is* a good-looking hound. But he is not my idea of a fox-catcher.

HYDES: I shall be sorry to see him go, all the same. He's a nice dog to show in kennel, and I was thinking that you might be inclined to use him some day to improve our lot in their knees and feet.

CATCHEM: Oh! And have many of them broken down this season?

HYDES : No, sir. Certainly not, sir. I must say I never whipped-in to a harder lot of hounds. Only one toe down out of 53½ couples, and that was Gameboy, who trod on some glass in the cub-hunting ; and when it was healed he was out hunting and never missed his turn for the rest of the season.

CATCHEM : Very well, then ! Now what about the old hounds ? We should have a useful lot to go. Suppose we had better go by the " book." Seven years, Frenzy. What about you, old girl ? You are a nailer, though old.

HYDES : So she is, and her sister Fractious, who whelped last week, every bit as good. I shall never forget how last Christmas Eve this couple was first over the deer park wall and rolled their fox over fifty yards from the sandhills—and they not stopped !—after an eight-mile point. They are the stuff to take out hunting ! But I never show them in kennel when I show the hounds : they are so old-fashioned looking. Does it ever strike you, sir, their resemblance to the picture of the old Squire's Frantic that hangs up in the hall ? They have the same light necks, arched loins and harepied colouring that Sir Nabob Pudding dislikes so ; and not very neat about the knees, either.

CATCHEM : Yes, they go back to Frantic through several lines. When I was a lad I often heard the Squire say that if he lived long enough every hound in his kennels would go back to that old bitch. And when that day arrived, he used to say, it would be a bad day for the foxes in Huntshire. By the bye, how are Fractious' whelps doing ?

HYDES : Going back a bit, I fear. She has six on her and I can't get a foster anywhere.

CATCHEM : Anything with whelps of the same date ?

HYDES : Yes, sir ; Radiance.

CATCHEM : Well, do away with Radiance's whelps and put three of Frenzy's on to her.

HYDES : But—but she's our best looking bitch—and the whelps are by Sir Nabob Pudding's cup dog, Lumberer. Why, I was dreaming of these whelps last night ; of how, if we were lucky with them we *would* have something to show people next year. After all, sir, we never breed a good-looking hound from the other sort, no matter what we mate them with. I grant you they are exceptionally good hunters, and with tongues like a peal of bells—but they come out pies, odd colours, light of bone.

CATCHEM : Well, I know all that, but I intend to keep all of that sort I can. Good night, Jack ! (*Walking home soliloquising.*) When old Frantic's characteristic looks (faults some may call them) are bred out of this kennel, so will her qualities in the field be bred out or diminished. Makes me think I must use Frenzy's son Forrager (just like the old bitch, too !) next season, although he *is* only a second season dog. But one never knows what accidents befall a hound ; and he has four crosses of the Squire's Frantic and is the best dog hound I have entered since I took these hounds. Pudding can have Lounger if he likes him—I don't.

*Seven years—What about you, old girl ?*

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GRUMPY. Well, I know all that, but I intend to keep all of that sort I can. Good night, Jack! (*Walking home soliloquising.*) When old Francis's fox-terrorists—mobs (Radicals some may call them) are bred out of dog kennels, so will the qualities in the field be bred out or diminished. Makes one think I must use Frenzy's son Forager (just like the old bitch, too!) next season, although he is only a second season dog. But one never knows what accidents befall a hound, and he has four crosses of the Squire's Patriotic and is the best dog hound I have entered since I took these hounds. Pudding can have Lounger if he likes him—I don't.

# Coin and Kind

WE will call him Tomkins (though his real name was nothing like it), and when his real name was taken in talk the big M.F.H. snapped out " For every fiver that fellow subscribes he gives me ten pounds worth of ' chat.' "

It was quite evident that, to the Master at any rate, Tomkins's presence in the hunting field was not made up for even by his very handsome subscription. Now, in the first place, and handsome as the subscription doubtless was, if it had ever been explained to Tomkins how little of his weight that handsome subscription really entitled him to swing—when the amount of it was compared with the total expenses of hunting the country—I really believe that Tomkins would not have given any more " chat." But the " big M.F.H.," though patient with his hounds, had not that patience which is required in a teacher of kindergarten. A teacher of kindergarten might have explained quietly to Tomkins something like the following : £10 buys a pair of " tops " ; £15 buys one saddle ; £25 buys a ton of meal ; £100 keeps a horse a year—and so on, *ad nauseam*. A teacher of kindergarten might even have gone further and shown that these are but a few items in the expenses, and that each one of those items is required in quantities according to the number of days per week hounds hunt, and the length of the season.

But a Master of Hounds could go further still. The kindergarten teacher having dealt with " coin " the Master of Hounds might explain about " kind." For, even in these days when the sinews of war are more than ever necessary to hunt a country, there is a form of subscription which is as necessary as " coin "—and that is " *kind*." The latter is not auditable, and therefore doesn't figure in the yearly Hunt balance-sheet ; but because of its absence an outsider or a

" Tomkins " may never learn the names of some who are among the greatest supporters of the Hunt.

Indeed this gift of " kind " is known to few, often to none except the Master, and at times not even to him. One of the handsomest examples of " kind " is that of the honorary secretaries and their honorary assistants, who often give not only six days a week, but the seventh ; who collect the money, settle claims with economy and tact —and generally create throughout the country an atmosphere of harmony without which no Hunt can be a happy one.

It is difficult to appraise the " coin value " of those who take a bitch and her whelps and who walk a couple of the latter (I have known those who have walked five in a season), returning them to kennels the following spring well grown and in blooming condition.

Again, how shall we appraise (for " Tomkins ") the value of those who give their land ungrudgingly to be hunted over, of those who take down their wire, and of those who keep their coverts fenced and quiet to ensure a find ? These latter are often " non-hunting " farmers, who, owing to the present agricultural conditions, are unable, themselves, to afford the time and the money to hunt—yet they will find the time to see the earths are well stopped and opened that evening again. How is this for a goodly subscription from a " non-hunting " man !

And a subscription in kind comes from those whose coverts are well stocked with cubs, and whose keepers genuinely welcome the hounds on a September morning. It is only where a master can rely on such quiet well-stocked coverts that the young hounds will be properly entered, and the pack enabled to hunt in good style throughout that season.

When he gets a cheerful request from a covert owner to cub-hunt certain coverts " so as to teach the birds how to fly "—then a master will gratefully accept that cheerful invitation in the spirit in which it was meant. This sporting covert owner knows what a bad example it is

for a country if any coverts are closed to hounds during the autumn. His motto is

> " A fox from the spinney more pleasure will bring
> Than twice 20,000 cock pheasants on wing."

One can hardly appraise the " coin value " of all this, but a Master was once heard to say, " A covert owner like this is worth a thousand a year. I wish to goodness he was also Squire of the Deepdene Woods." And what about the " kind " of those who run gymkhanas and send in a welcome and substantial sum to the Hunt funds ? And of the ladies who manage the Hunt ball so successfully, socially and financially ? All this comes under Kind.

It is not to be forgotten, either, that there are many who subscribe both coin *and* kind : so, when the subscription of a Tomkins was only coin and chat—the less wonder if the Master seemed to resent his " chat."

# *Meditations of Mr. Blowhard*

(HUNTSMAN TO LORD FOXHOLME)

I'M mounted the best, and everything liberal, with a Master who's all for sport. He understands hunting and he understands hounds, and I don't want a better to breed our pack ; but if he wants me to show the followers sport, he's got to leave a lot to me.

Yes, he knows all about hunting—as far as a gen'leman can ; but of course he's not been through the mill as I have. I was second whipper-in to old Croaks for six seasons, when Jack Sprite was first. You understand what *that* meant. " Sharp " was the word and no mistake. All " fair hunting " you know, no " patchouli " or " rose-water," *but sharp*, as I say. Good hunting, but as " near the wind " as didn't hurt hounds, or disgrace our good name.

Croaks would grumble all the way home if we hadn't caught our fox. Whenever we found, if he passed either of us whippers-in it was, " D—— you, look alive ! Work your soul out till we catch 'im." Ah ! And that's the spirit, too.

Croaks had a great command over his hounds. In some coverts he would let 'em spread out and draw as wide as you ever saw a pack draw ; in others he would almost " tuft "—keeping about thirteen couples or so at his heels all the while. It was a knack he had, and it wasn't very long before hounds learnt it from him, tufting or spreading out to draw, according to the sort of covert it was or its condition at the time of year. I saw 'em do it straight off for Jack Sprite the first day ever he hunted them, one time when Croaks got hurt. Shows how hounds learn things.

Croaks was the quickest to get away on his fox I ever saw. Odd times he would take 'em out of covert and swing them round to the holloa, cutting off p'raps half-a-mile—according to the wind. And I

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will say, I never once saw him strike heel way. Other days he would hunt the line right out, cheering them away. I asked him, one night riding home, when he happened to be particular pleased with me for helping him to kill his fox, " why did you hunt the line out—instead of getting them out, like the time before, and getting a nick on your fox ? "

" It was a different type of scent, lad," he answered. It was a *holding* scent. And it would have upset them to no purpose if I'd interfered. The other time, though they did run harder in the open, scent was really of a more volatile sort. On a holding scent, d'you see, the length of a field or a minute lost (though I grudge both) is not so important as getting hounds well settled down to hunting their fox. But what we call a *volatile* scent is a quickly vanishing one. A holding scent gets only *gradually* weaker, like the taper on a good ash stick ; but the volatile scent has a knack of going " snap "—like an elastic band.

" If the scent is of the quick-vanishing sort, how long to leave hounds alone is what you've got to decide. One minute behind your fox you can race him, but three minutes later hounds won't so much as be able to tell you he has ever been that way. The time when I let 'em hunt it out we were in the thin end of the covert ; but the time I took 'em out the opposite end from the holloa there was all that thick stuff before us. Nice guy I'd have looked if they'd got on to another fox in covert and you holloaing the old customer away.

" Some folks," he warned me, " will tell you Croaks can get hounds to come to him even when they're in *full cry* on another fox. Don't you believe it, lad (and I wouldn't like my hounds to do it, either). But say nowt. What I *can* do is to time the right moment for getting their heads up. That moment may only last for a couple of seconds, but if the moment comes—I recognise it. I expect," he went on, " you'll be a huntsman yourself some day. Remember this : NEVER TRY TO DO WITH YOUR HOUNDS WHAT YOU ARE NOT CERTAIN YOU *CAN* DO. And with that," he ended, " I've told you the whole secret."

With Croaks our orders were never to holloa if hounds were running hard in covert when another fox went away. We were to keep our eye on him as far as we could, and then to nip in and tell Croaks. He rarely made any answer. "Does he look a good 'un?" was the most he ever said. As to what he would do—that, as I came to see, all depended on the scent. I remember when, on a rare scenting day, we viewed a famous old fox away—an old fox with two white pads. Hounds were tied to another in covert, so I came up and told him about it. "Stay with me, lad," he said, "and if they get out on a ride—or if the fox makes a turn and they check for a second—we'll have 'em out on the white-legged 'un."

It was a full twelve minutes before that fox crossed the big ride, hounds in full cry. Quick as thought Croaks gallops straight on his line, foiling it towards the pack. One holloa, and he has the pack away, laying them on to our white-padded friend. As I say, there was a *holding scent*. Hounds struck it; but they knew it for a weaker one and a different one from that which they'd left. *Romulus*, *Remus* and *Clinker* all tried to drive back into covert, and I can well remember how old Croaks praised me for putting them on to the body at once. For with such a heavy tongue as that 1½ couple had, they would have swung the whole pack to them.

Croaks's methods were always varying. During cub-hunting he was, in general, very steady and quiet, and made hounds work every inch themselves. "Learning them the game," he called it, or sometimes, "developing nose and brains." But he would sometimes, suddenly, do something one didn't expect of him. "Just to sharpen 'em up," he would explain to us whippers-in—after (as usually happened) he had killed his cub by that piece of unexpected interference.

Yes, I learnt a lot from Croaks. Later on I was "first" to George Ketch, and I picked up a lot from him, too. He had all Croaks's

methods. He had whipped in to him for four seasons, and Croaks always said he never had to say a word to George in the field. He worked him, as he always declared, " with his eyes."

Ketch was gipsy bred. Such a voice, such a note on his horn ! He could make hounds' hackles rise, or if they rioted or did wrong he could make 'em almost weep. They'd do anything for him. He didn't seem to pay much attention to them when out with them—always let 'em rake along in front. Never spoke to hounds unless it was to make them *do something*. Never gossiped to 'em like some fellows do. But when he did speak—they did what he wanted them to do.

Ketch worked his way up. He would often talk to me about it. " I'm not in Croaks's position," he'd remind me—" huntsman to a nobleman's private pack. I'm huntsman to a big subscription pack ; and if I don't keep 'em moving and show sport I'll get the sack. I am a favourite as long as I give them fun. If I strike a bad season—an *unlucky* season of bad foxes, bad stopping, or bad scent—it'll just be ' No, Ketch, I'm sorry, but we must make a change. We're engaging young so-and-so from the Brokeshire, who is showing such sport ! '

" Before all, it's sport I must show ; and, much as I should like to, I can't afford to hunt hounds in the style of amateur gentlemen with lots of money in the provinces. I love my hounds," he would say, " and if I had my way I'd never deceive them. And because, for bread-and-butter's sake, I *do* have to deceive 'em at times, I must make it up to them so doubly well that they either look on me as inspired, or else are so happy with themselves that they forgive me."

Ketch was a man who thought a lot, and he'd a wide understanding of what his job required of him. " Besides hunting hounds," he would tell me, " you must almost compare me to a man staging a great day's amusement, and I can only do that if a lot of the ' staging ' part is left to me. I mustn't be bound strictly to the order of drawing coverts, or to the cub-hunting of them. I mustn't be strictly bound at all. I'll

serve my Master loyally, but he must understand that I can't work to hard and fast rules."

As for Stickpoodle Wood, until Ketch came no one had a good word for that covert. In fact, when Patsy Slow was huntsman, if hounds were to draw Stickpoodle Wood the field went home. But there was nothing the matter with the covert—the foxes were the trouble and a rotten bad breed they were.

Ketch went to Stickpoodle, early, cub-hunting—and by dint of hard mornings, holding up, mobbing and digging, I think we pretty well exterminated almost every fox in the place. The Master was away in Scotland, and when he came back he said we'd killed too many. Ketch said he thought there were plenty more left. But *how* he thought that I *don't* know. For, besides killing every cub in the covert he had dug and killed four old vixens. Bad vixens make bad sport. The country was well foxed and all that season, whenever we ran into Stickpoodle, we drove our fox clean through it—he being a stranger. And later on, when we began to find there again, the foxes would go straight away and give runs. "Bad vixens, bad sport"—there's no truer word than that.

Ketch always had in mind the stage-managing side of his job. It was because of those reasons that he determined that one of our coverts he wouldn't cub-hunt at all, if he could work it. This covert had a strong litter, and in it we had turned down a number of cubs which the Master had sent from Scotland.

This covert helped us out several times, and enabled Ketch to reward his hounds by laying hold of a soft fox after days of much lifting, wide casting, and "changing." Days which otherwise would have got hounds disappointed and made them not come so well on with him in those long casts. I remember one day, especially, when one of those coverts stood Ketch in good stead. We had a large crowd out, and the Master said we must show them a rare good day. We drew Blank-

thornes, but previously in the season we had caught the two good foxes it had held, after hunts ; and now there was only a ringing vixen there for us. We made a few rings outside and back to the covert. Ketch soon spotted that she would keep up these dodging tactics till dark, so the next time, when we checked in cattle a few fields away from the covert, Ketch decided not to let hounds try back.

He told us whippers-in to work forward and wide, and to keep a look-out for a fox on the move or for any holloas. On he raked for a mile-and-a-half over a good country, hounds coming along keenly. Getting below Ryehill (a favourite line for foxes to cross), he touched a line. It was too stale to bring off anything, but Ketch was letting hounds work it, when I came back to tell him that a labourer had seen a fox close by Ringpool, some ten minutes ago another mile on. Ketch had the map of the country always well in his eye, and he took hounds over the places easiest for them at a good canter, never wasting a moment. We hit this line—it was a bit fresher than the one we had left —and we ran on well over a stiff line for a while, but then scent began fizzling out. The fences had thinned the field, and there were a number of loose horses, and Ketch was still two miles from the covert which held those Scotch cubs. Casting right-handed he got on to the road that led to the covert, and, pegging along at a good seven-mile-an-hour trot, he sent us whippers-in " on " with orders,—" *We've got to get hold of one of them.*" Then he slipped hounds into the covert. We held them up, and hounds laying hold of one, Ketch took him out of the covert and broke him up—just as the straggling field came along. It was voted a good hunt of one-and-a-half hours, a six-mile point, and a kill.

" It didn't amuse me," said Ketch, " but it gave sport to a big field ; it sent them all home happy : and my hounds were rewarded by blood for coming on with me so well. But those are not everyday tactics," he added. " And I take a good look at the field, to see who is out, before I try them on. *For it don't go down with some !* "

# *Three Sportsmen of the Mendips*

### *SCENE I.—THE PUPPY SHOW*

GOLDSWINE : Jolly gathering, this, Mrs. Strait. Never miss it if I can help it. Master always asks everyone.

MRS. STRAIT : Yes, and I hope everyone will take a puppy for him.

GOLDSWINE (*laughingly*) : *I* won't ! Lots of people with untidy places can have puppies. They ruin my garden.

MRS. STRAIT : Well, mine don't do much damage, except this last lot eat up my new shoes ; but it serves me right for leaving them out, with puppies about.

GOLDSWINE : Shoes can be bought, after all. But it's different with a garden. I never took a puppy after one made a nest for himself in my herbaceous border.

MRS. STRAIT (*getting vexed*) : Well, you can plant more—" after all."

GOLDSWINE (*getting more vexed*) : It's not a question of spending money with me, it's a case that I like my place beautiful. Besides, my head gardener was very upset over it.

### *SCENE II.—THE SAME PUPPY SHOW*

MR. HAYCORN (*responding for puppy walkers*) : I'm always glad to take a puppy, and to-day I'm proud to see Trimbush win. I've walked twenty-five puppies up to now—I hope to walk fifty before I die. I said to Watchorn, bring me round a *couple* next time. I am an old man now, I said, and if I want to have reared fifty foxhounds I must work double shifts ! I've never been able to afford to hunt, but I always said, if you *can't* hunt, the next best thing is to be represented out hunting by a good hound you have walked. (*Looking vaguely in the direction of Goldswine*) : Of course, if you hunt, it's not necessary to have a hound to represent you. Thank you, gentlemen, for drinking my health.

*SCENE III.—DECEMBER*

GOLDSWINE (*reading his letters before a roaring fire*) : I never heard such rubbish ! The hunt secretary asking me to subscribe a pound to pay Mr. Haycorn for the damage to his seeds ! These claims are such rot : after all, what has he lost but a few blades of grass ? Besides, he knows perfectly well I had to cross it, for otherwise I'd have missed the hunt of the season.

# *Told by the Kennel Horse*

NO, I can't say I ever hunted, worse luck. My work is to draw carcases for the kennels, varied occasionally by taking some puppies out in the kennel cart ; even in that I suppose I shall soon be superseded by the ubiquitous motor car. And then I shall join those dog-horses in yonder paddock, patiently waiting my turn for the copper !

But on one occasion in my life I *did* follow hounds, and if it had not been for an unfortunate accident I might have boasted like the poet *Pars parva fui.*

One Monday (it was in December) our neighbours the Larkspurs had hunted a renowned fox from the other side of their vale, putting him to ground in Sunny Copse, which is close by here. It was a seven mile point. That same evening, Faggotts, our earth-stopper, blew into the huntsman's cottage to tell Watchorn that he was feeling uneasy about some gypsies. These gypsies had seen the Larkspur hounds earth their fox, and as the night was dark and rough he wouldn't be surprised, he said, if the Romanies came back to dig this fox for the sake of his fine pelt.

After a glass of ale Faggotts and Watchorn, lighting a lantern, decided to go and see that fox safe. Close by the copse they surprised a gypsy, who bolted, leaving a sack which on further examination was found to hold a brace of foxes. It was easy to distinguish the Larkspur fox, with his deep white tag, his nut brown jacket and length of body ; his companion being but a very ordinary looking cub of that year.

"Just in the nick of time," says Faggotts. "If we'd arrived five minutes later their skins, by Christmas, would have been dangling round some woman's neck. I suppose we'd better turn 'em loose ?"

*Watchorn was stoking up the lop-eared blood mare*

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Watchorn sees stalking up the lop-eared blood mare

"Hold on a moment," Watchorn told him: "it's an ill wind blows no good. What's the matter with keeping this Larkspur fox for the meet here next Thursday and giving him his return fare by express across the Larkspur Vale?"

"Righto!" said Faggotts; "but what shall we do with t'other bloke?"

"Oh, I've a job for him," grinned Watchorn. "We'll have a bird in hand and one in the bush, too. I'm thinking I shall put him in the kennel cart and tell old Saul to drive out with him, keeping sight of us all the time. If the old 'un should run us out of scent, Saul can shake out this other fox under a hedge—and we'll end up with a kill in Larkspur land! This Larkspur fox has now beaten them time without number for close on five seasons. Why, it's a regular leg pull now to ask Frostyface when he intends catching him! He'll blow up and explode when he hears that Charles Watchorn and the Woodpine bitches caught the old customer at the very first time of asking!"

Up to a point all went off according to plan—and away from Sunny Copse raced 18½ couples, the pick of the Woodpine kennels. On sinking the vale Watchorn's cheer could be heard ringing out, driving the bitches almost to a frenzy. It was a straight-necked fox and no amount of cheering could have driven hounds over the line—so what did it matter that Watchorn's cheer should ring out a shade too lustily? And his own blood-curdling yells were a help and relief to Watchorn. If he had not let off his pent-up excitement thus I verily believe his eyes might have popped out of their sockets or the top of his head blown right off.

All across this good scenting valley Watchorn was stoking up the lop-eared blood mare in a style which she had never experienced since the day she was knocked down for eighty guineas after winning a "seller" at Wincanton. But now hounds had left the vale and were brought to their noses on the cold-scenting wolds. A flock of sheep

ahead didn't improve matters. Scent was getting thinner on this light land. But Watchorn wasn't worrying : he felt sure of his kill.

" Now for a Leicestershire cast," he muttered. " It can't lose me my fox, and at any rate it will add on a couple of miles to the run." Catching hold of his hounds with that assurance which a huntsman only feels when he is lifting to a certainty, " Lope forrard, dearies, lope," he cries, and it is a treat to see him rapidly moving those bitches before him for the next mile.

But if you could have closely observed Watchorn all the time, you might have noticed, in spite of his general composure and calm, how anxiously at moments he was peering into the distance and looking away to his right and left. Had you habitually hunted with him and known his methods you would have wondered to-day why on four separate occasions, and for no obvious reason, he blew a series of notes like an S.O.S. Was it a fresh horse he wanted ? No, the lop-eared mare looked like staying on into the New Year.

No ! Watchorn didn't want any fresh horse—but by now he did badly want the kennel cart, the kennel cart with that fresh fox so conveniently held in reserve. The situation, in fact, was getting a bit desperate when a horseman came galloping up. " Watchorn," he said, " the Master has had a bad fall. One collar bone is certainly gone. What'll you do about it ? Are you going on ? "

" Whereabouts is he ? " enquired Watchorn anxiously.

" Where is he ? He's halfway home by now. He's in the kennel cart. We happened to meet it and —— "

" In the kennel c—— ? " began Watchorn. " In the *kennel* cart ? " He pulled himself together. " Well, sir, I think, if you agree, sir, I ought to make for home—er, in case he's bad. We're miles out of our country and hounds haven't had a line for a few fields. Yes, if you agree, sir, I think I ought to make for home at once—in case he's bad."

It was some weeks later that the Master was talking over the season's sport with Watchorn. " Watchorn," he said, " that was a fine hunt in December—into the Larkspur country. I felt sorry that you didn't handle your fox. I fear my accident was a good deal to blame for it ? "

" Well, there may be something in *that*, sir," said Watchorn, getting a bit red in the face. " I'll admit that when I heard they were driving you home in the kennel cart it worried me no end."

THE MASTER (*to himself*) : " Faithful servant, Watchorn, almost one of the family."

WATCHORN (to *himself*) : " Wonder if he knows ? "

Well, it's just as well that neither should know. If the Master knew he might lose confidence in Watchorn. That would be a pity. It was the first time Watchorn ever played this game, and, suspecting the Master knows, he's not likely to try it on again.

As for anyone else knowing, that ain't likely, either. Faggotts and Watchorn naturally won't blab. Old Saul is dead—and I'm dumb. What's more, I look like being boiled any hour, for I saw a new Ford lorry delivered here this morning, all fitted with a windlass.

# "Lost" or "Killed"

"THERE is a vast difference in the meaning of these two words to us," said an old Midland fox one moonlight night to his companions, "and there is a vast difference in them both to hounds and huntsman. And although these two words stand as opposite to each other as do the poles, yet which of them it is to be so often depends on a seemingly slight incident.

"Occasionally at the end of a run a fox is killed which is not the hunted one. Taking myself for example, I have on several occasions been reported 'killed.' Once I was so weary that I could not have stood up another ten minutes, but fortunately I disturbed a lame fox which hounds promptly despatched. Everyone believed it to be me! But both Jack and Tom knew better.

"I have had lucky escapes, due to various causes. Unlike hounds, I like to see a large and hard-riding field out, and a mob of horsemen at one end of the road and a tumult of riders at the other, boxing up hounds and huntsman. Jack so loves his hounds that his only thought on such occasions is to avoid getting any of his darlings kicked. This delays matters and valuable moments are thus wasted, while all the time I keep toddling along.

"When they do recover my line again, unless there is a holding scent, hounds can never run at the cracking pace at which they took me down to that road. After every check and delay scent gets weaker, so you can work out by rule of thumb that after a number of these halts scent probably vanishes altogether and the fox is 'LOST'—the huntsman and hounds coming in for the blame.

"Some 'know-alls' may say that a good pack of hounds will not mind being over-ridden, but believe me the higher mettled the hounds the greater the harm that is done. Occasionally by their noise and

stench the hunting motorists will be the means of a bad running fox escaping, while on the other hand they will often so head a good specimen of our race that he dies like an August cub, turned back into the jaws of the pack. Had he not been headed this good fox would probably have run his pursuers out of scent or else honourably yielded his brush after providing a good run.

" A relation of mine owed his death to the chattering of a jay ! He had stolen away, exhausted, yet unseen, and had lain down in a thorn brake. The huntsman had drawn his hounds out of covert and was making for home, having ' lost ' his fox ; but on hearing the bird's cry he took his hounds back and dropped straight on to my unfortunate cousin's refuge.

" The condition of the pack plays an important rôle in classifying us among the ' KILLED ' instead of the ' LOST.' I do not fear the best pack of hounds ever bred if unfit, while on the other hand a second-rate lot, properly conditioned, can fill me with dread. I have been hunted by different packs, and it strikes me that they all run very similarly at the outset, but the question is how they behave later on. Some seem to press you all the time, hunting more and more fiercely, while others on a similar scent (and as you know, I am a judge of scenting conditions) seem to flag and lose all perseverance.

" Men, naturally, are only able to judge scent by what the hounds tell them, so they will say, of course, that the one pack was favoured by a good scent throughout, whilst the other pack suffered from scent getting worse and worse.

" Odd hounds may develop great sagacity at some time in their career. Luckily for us they are in the minority, and will usually not develop it before their fourth or fifth season. Even then the folly of men will often save us, since a fashion for youth and pace will frequently cause a wise old hound to be drafted after the cub-hunting is done. These old workmen are a great menace to us, especially if they have a

good voice and will rally on the rest of the pack and teach the puppies to hunt in the right style. They may not be swift, yet by hunting close and turning with their fox they keep up the chase instead of checking and requiring the assistance of the huntsman. A huntsman's assistance, however skilfully given, takes up time. Should a wise old hound have been the means of preventing the pack from checking on but three occasions during an hour's hunting, if you allow an average of three minutes only to the huntsman to recover the line, a wise old Nestor may gain nine golden minutes for him, besides greatly reducing the chances of changing foxes.

"Another great danger to us is a cunning old second whipper-in, one more renowned for his venery than his gallantry. But in these days of rapid promotions the old sort is becoming a *rara avis*. A small mercy for which we foxes are truly thankful."

## "The Favourite"

To the tune of "Drink, Puppy, Drink!"

I WAS hacking home with Jack
As he rode behind his pack,
And I asked him which he thought was his best hound.
Though he named me quite a score
As he thought the matter o'er,
Yet the answer to my query I ne'er found.

"There is Harkaway, of course,
Who's a match for any horse,
Still Nimrod may be yet a shade the faster;
And I can't leave out old Gambler,
Nor yet overlook our Rambler,
While Banker is the favourite of the Master.

"But to find a fox in covert
You can't beat the grey-pied Plover—
Then for drive, I think, perhaps the pick is Nettle.
Little Forager's a marvel,
While Fencer is a 'darvel,'
And Fearnought has maybe the highest mettle.

"I forgot to mention Handy
And the dapper little Dandy,
And Harriet and Harmony and Hazel;
While Popinjay and Spinaway,
If they but strike a scenting day,
Will tire the best of horses in the stable.

" Those with the tenderest noses
Are the litter of Wildrose's,
The loudest voice in covert is our Contest ;
Little Bounty I would ne'er let go
For her sire was old Bendigo,
In his day you'd not look further for the best."

# Comic Hounds

TO the average fox-hunter, a pack of hounds is composed of some twenty couples more or less alike in appearance and identical as to character : but to those whose daily life is spent in their company hounds differ from each other as do the inhabitants of the globe. Differing as they do, if you would get the best from them they must perforce be differently treated. Traits of individuality or character (so long as they are not of a noxious kind) should not be hammered out. Looking back over many seasons, and therefore over a large number of hounds, I think of many instances of peculiar traits—and I should think of a lot more if I went carefully through the " lists " or dug among my diaries.

When I first ventured hunting a pack of hounds, the late Mr. T. Butt Miller, of Cricklade (besides giving me much valuable advice on the handling of hounds, kennel management, and as regards lines of blood) gave me his old Negative 1897 by the Warwickshire Nailer—telling me that if I watched her carefully she would be a tutor to me, help me out of difficulties and perhaps catch me a fox. One lesson she soon taught me ! We had checked on some ploughed land. Negative was driving to recover the line and, foolishly mistaking her drive for feathering, I cheered her. She stopped short and looked up at me, rebuke in her eyes. Though it was a quarter of a century ago, I can see those eyes still. It taught me early in my career to be chary of cheering a hound until I was certain that it actually " had it."

Harkaway was a remarkable hound, his dam being a litter sister to Capt. Johnstone's famous Harbinger, who I believe ended his days at Brixworth. Harkaway in his first morning hunt at the head of the pack, finally ran the cub into a drain under the road, then going in pulled him out—his first fox and mine ! In his third season hounds had patiently

drawn a large and thick thorn covert. The horn sounding "blank," they came sauntering out to their huntsman. Harkaway, usually first in and first out of covert, didn't appear till a couple of minutes later. Galloping up to greet me, waving his stern, he gave a couple of short bays as if answering a roll call, and then scampered back into covert. I didn't let him be stopped, but dismounting, I followed in on foot. He led me to an old tree grown over with ivy ; and there, with hackles up and lashing stern, he kept on jumping at the trunk, challenging his fox. And the end of it was that Harkaway had the honour of carrying home his mask—after a six mile point. In closing a cast, making good the ground, he was invaluable. If you came to an obstacle too awkward to get the pack over quickly into the next field, Harkaway would, at a word, jump, climb or get over it somehow, and swinging himself in a cast would make his ground good as safely and surely as eighteen couples could have done it.

His brother Harbinger was only a pack dog, but he had his peculiarity. With a fox in hand he would nip in behind and then grab the seat of one's breeches. He once caused considerable pain as well as laughter as he grabbed more than the "cords !"

Gretna was a useful looking bitch by Belvoir Gameboy 1900. Her first season's tally was one fox under fifty brace. Yet she never left my horse's heels. Often I decided to put her down, but each time I reprieved her. She was the most affectionate hound I had and I felt that if I put her down I should be killing the one who loved me most. I determined to give her the chance of the whole of her second season's cub-hunting, but vowed if she did not enter she should never see the dawn of the opening day. It was our last morning ; she had not left the heels of my horse and so her number was up. We had lost our hunted cub and were making for the kennels. But suddenly, when crossing through a park, Gretna drove on to the main drive, working slowly down the centre of the road and throwing her tongue like a bell.

We all thought she must be fooling us, but gave her her chance. I felt if she now added deceit to idleness I should have no remorse for her fate. The pack never having heard her open before would not heed, but looked on incredulously. However, after taking the line down another thirty or forty yards, she turned off onto the grass, and there the rest of the pack struck the line. Gretna running at the top and some way off, we caught the hunted fox under the park wall. It was indeed a " short head." Gretna never looked back for the next five seasons, and, mated with the afore-mentioned Harkaway, bred me two as good bitches as I ever shall hunt (Gladsome and Grateful). Both these bitches, unfortunately, when in their third season and at the height of their excellence, met a tragic end on their return from visiting a friendly kennel, through the negligence of the Railway.

Franklin was a hard worker, with Lord Middleton Freshman blood. His shoulders were moderate, and these proved his Waterloo, for jumping down a big drop into a road he jammed them up his neck, and had to be put out of his misery. His peculiarity was his love of " fetch and carry." Often after breaking up a fox I would give him my whip or gloves to carry while walking back to my horse : walking by my side, with head erect and stern well up (he was a bit gay about it at all times !) the picture of pride, he would never drop his charge until he put it into my hand.

Tulip was by Warwick Tudor, very small (about 19 in.), but all quality and as active as a cat. At a word from me she would jump up in front of my saddle, and I would give her a share of my sandwich. She had had distemper badly, and one morning at exercise, thinking she looked a bit tired, I had carried her home in front of me on my hack and given her a biscuit. Having done it afterwards at exercise several times, she seemed to enjoy it and would sit in front of me without my holding her. In her second season she once went into a pigsty and put up and killed her fox single-handed. She never seemed to forget the

incident, and often, if we checked by a farmyard, straight in she would go and nose about the buildings. But she never was so fortunate again.

Vampire was a very good hound with good tongue and nose, and sagacity quite out of the ordinary run. He had two lines to Grafton Woodman and one to Brocklesby Wrangler. One windy day, checking on a plough, the pack swung up the wind for a considerable distance, as one sees them do occasionally in a high wind. Vampire, turning right-handed, hit his fox off in a furrow down-wind of them. Seeing he had no hounds with him he stood, after having "altered course 180 degrees," and vociferated loudly until he saw them galloping to his call—when he turned and went on with the line. I saw him do likewise when the whole pack struck a heel scent up-wind (through my fault, too!) the old dog getting them back more efficaciously than any cheer could have done. Another time, hunting down a narrow lane, a goat would keep on running before him on the fox's line. Vampire, exasperated at last by this moving foil, collared the goat by the throat, and throwing him over proceeded on to hunt his fox.

Do you believe the story of the famous Dumfries bitch, of whom it was said that she could often be seen holding up a flock of sheep, to prevent them running on, while the pack hunted the line? I have often heard the story doubted, but I myself have always credited it to the hound. It is not unlikely she had been at walk on a sheep farm, the shepherd dog being her companion and mentor, and in that case what would be more natural than that he should have taught her his work? I remember that one April I did myself receive a letter from a puppy walker asking me if he could keep his foxhound another month as his dog had died and the foxhound was doing his work. This foxhound puppy would at a word go off and drive the cows in from the fields into his walker's yard at milking time.

Villainy was a particularly fierce bitch when with whelps—so much so that none of the kennel staff dare go near her; yet she would lead

*Bismark* would *get hold of the mask*

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my little girl, then aged two, to her hutch, and would keep guard outside while she played with the puppies. But I believe that this complete trust in children is common even among wild animals.

Bismark was an excellent foxhound, by Milton Rector, dam by the late Mr. Butt Miller's Worcester '99. I am not dealing here with prowess in the field, so confine myself to his "comic" side. Bismark *would* get hold of the mask. In all his years of servitude he always did get it in the end, and would fight and scheme for it until he did, even if he only got it a hundred yards from the kennel gates. It was an obsession with him—or was it a vow? One hot April day hounds had caught their fox and were going along the road, Bismark, as usual, carrying his trophy. We came to a stream, and I stopped to let them lap. Bismark first tried to drink while holding on to his mask; but finding he couldn't do so—and being unwilling to put the mask down with others waiting to snatch it—he trotted briskly back down the road to a cottage we had passed. At the open door stood the owner, who tried to prevent him from coming in, shrieking out that she wouldn't have that "bloodstained head" in her home! Bismark, growling, soon passed by her through the doorway, and hiding his mask behind her door came back and had his drink. The moment he had finished he returned to the cottage and recovered his hidden treasure.

Vexer was a big determined hound with a line to Brocklesby Wrangler '99 (big, at least for my standard). Late one evening in the ploughland, a long way behind our fox, and scent failing, I thought I would either get on better terms or abandon it. I lifted the pack on to some grasslands a mile ahead, but I failed to recover the line. Finding we were Vexer short, a second horseman (who was doing second whipper-in's duty that day) went back and found Vexer working out the line slowly in a furrow. When he tried to bring the hound along Vexer jumped at him, biting him in the leg, and returned to the line. So we paid Vexer the compliment of going back for him ourselves.

Another time, in a thickly enclosed country, we came to a high thorn fence with only one smeuse, where the fox had gone out. Vexer at head, coming to it and finding he could not get through, savaged a smaller hound who was doing so. For this I drafted him. I was loath to part with him, but in parts of the country I was then hunting hounds had continually to smeuse through thick thorn bullfinches.

Despot was a very keen little dog on a fox—and equally so on rats ! I would often take him out with the terriers, ratting in summer : and he usually got his share.

Landmark was well-named, for a better marker I never entered. When digging a fox he would leave the diggers and sniff around some distance off. If he began to scratch anywhere, and to whimper, you could go directly to the place and be certain you could crown down on to the fox. He was also the only hound I have ever had to whom it made no difference whether the fox had been coursed by a dog or not. He showed this trait early in his first season, and on that occasion, hounds hanging back and not going on with him, I thought it was riot. I soon realised Landmark was right, and what an invaluable talent he had.

Gangway was a high-mettled little dog, and it would have needed a bold man to take a fox away from him. On one occasion, after a good woodland hunt, hounds killed their fox in a hanging wood. By the time I had dismounted and got to them he was eaten up. I was going back to my horse with the pack wishing I had something as " testimony" to the kill, when up came Gangway with the remains of the mask and dropped it into my outstretched hand of his own free will !

I believe it was with the Warwickshire and of late years that a fox killed near the edge of a pond fell into the water and sank. One bitch, I was told, dived in and brought it to the bank. I believe this bitch was one of those brought from the Meath by the late Lord Willoughby de Broke, and that she went back to the renowned Heythrop Chorister—Sturman's favourite hound.

I was told that a Pytchley hound—I believe it was the excellent Statesman—came home during the day's hunting and finding its way up to Freeman's bedroom (he was at the time in bed from a hunting accident) sat by his bedside to keep him company. And I remember—But if I tell you more of Comic Hounds perhaps I shall bore you. Or you might even come to doubt my veracity.

# Harkaway's Yarn

"*LOT 31 at six guineas! Against you both on the right! Any advance for three couples of entered dog hounds? Seven! Captain Vestcoat!*" Well, at least I am relieved to think that I am to remain in England and hunt the fox (although it *is* in a provincial country). And I am glad that the purchaser was not our runner up—that swarthy foreign nobleman. I could never get myself to hunt "Le Sanglier" or "Chevreuil." All scents are distasteful to me except "fox," to which I was well entered.

But it beats me why old Joe ever drafted me! I can quite see why he let the others go. That great galumping tan brute Dawdler never did a stroke of work. Streamer was jealous. Spectre was delicate, and always tired by work. Romulus never hunted at all his first season owing to getting distemper late, and Joe always said he wouldn't waste time entering a second season hound. They had never done him any good.

But why draft *me*? How often has old Joe cheered me with a "Huic to Harkaway! Yoooi!" It is true that ever since that fox (which I tackled single handed) bit me in the knee it fills up after hunting and makes me limp. But bless you, I am always sound by next hunting day, and even if I am *not* quite right, I frisk about so on a hunting morning that Joe wouldn't be able to spot it and put me back. I don't say that I don't often go a bit short when I get into covert out of his sight; but the moment we start running I warm up sound and am usually at the head. They kept on my brother Harbinger to keep the blood, though I always was the better of the two. I suppose there's really no doubt that it is all through that cursed fox bite that I've lost the best huntsman and best home I am ever likely to get. I shall hate foxes now more than ever.

*Any advance for three couples of entered dog hounds ?*

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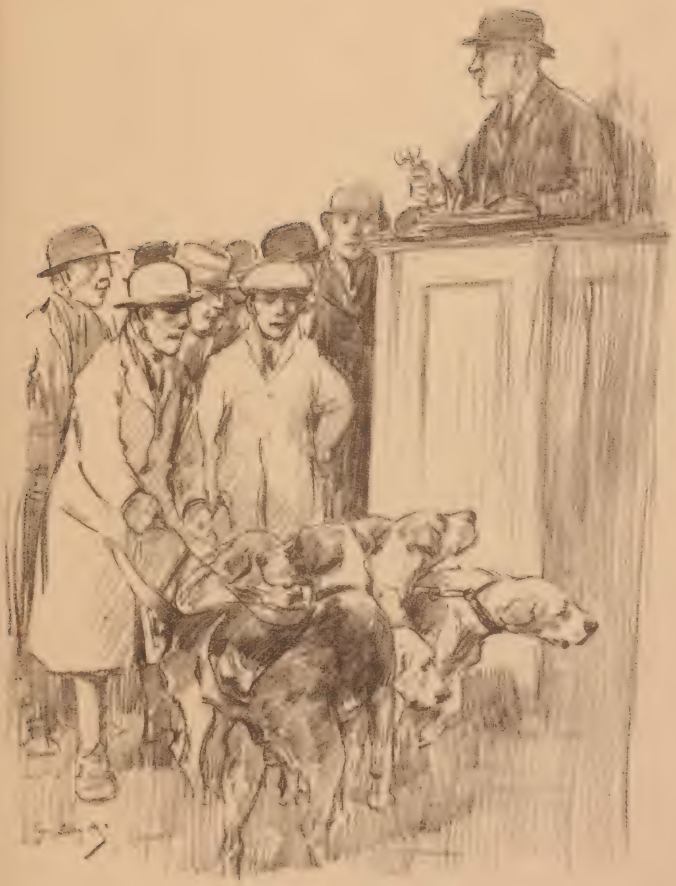

Dear old Joe! How he did handle us to be sure. He'd leave us alone in our work, standing well away from us and not foiling the scent, giving us every chance to do it ourselves. No whipper-in would ever have dared drive us along. But then we didn't need it. One chirrup from Joe and we flew to him when we were at fault. Joe's chirrup to us was as good as if he said to us "Here's your fox lads." He was a wizard. Yet he always said he didn't know as much about hunting as we did; and that it was we who told him where to cast, or pulled him out of a difficulty.

Joe never took any credit himself for the sport. With him it was always "hounds hit him off," or "hounds fresh found him," or "hounds caught him unaided." If he ever mentioned himself in a day's work it would be "*I* lost him." He always gave us the wind drawing woodlands, and he'd work for it like the captain of a schooner. If we got into a woodland, working down the wind, he would wangle things somehow and soon the wind was in our teeth or on our cheek. He was always thinking of us—in kennel, on the road or in chase—and I bet even when he lay in bed. How annoyed he would get if we didn't get enough room on the road! And if one of us picked up a thorn, he was off his horse in a trice and taking it out as tenderly as a woman, with a "Poor ould boy; now you feel better." That night, when we got back to kennels, he would examine it and dress it. "We can't spare you," he would say, "and we can't let you miss a turn and lose your condition —to get ridden over first day out, being short of work."

I could go on for ever talking about Joe and his methods. But he might have remembered, before thinking of drafting me, that it was solely through me he handled the famous Stoke End fox. . . . Well, what's the use of regret? I'd better make the best of my new quarters.

* * * * * * * *

Well! I said I would make the best of it—and I think I have. We were a pretty mixed lot, consisting of so many drafts coming from so

many kennels. Some good lookers, some plain as pikes. Some honest, some the scum of the underworld and a couple of "criminals." But in time our master sifted the wheat from the chaff. One he omitted to draft. But on one moonlight night we saw to that ourselves. We never left one bit of him. Being rather a leggy, active sort of dog they came to the conclusion that he must have jumped out of the kennels—and *they advertised for him.* It made me smile !

But, for all the drafting, we had no sport. By December I was getting fed up. No sport, and the members of our hunt crabbing us. Our young master was kind and keen but he didn't know his "grammar." How I yearned for old Joe.

The season was well on, and only a historic run could save the situation. So one night I decided on a plan, and calling up my comrades I laid it before them. They promised me strict obedience.

You have no doubt all heard of the Hardshire's Boxing Day Run ? It was reported by all the sporting press, and created no end of a stir. Well, here's the true bill of it. Nutty Copse was our first draw—a covert which held lots of pheasants and never a fox. But it belonged to a member of the Hunt Committee and our young master didn't like to pass it by unvisited. In covert at Nutty Copse I gave the agreed signal to the pack, and throwing my tongue leaped over the covert fence and away I went like greased lightning, the pack after me in full cry, some five miles straight across the pick of the vale. I led them to the river Dank crossing it midway between the two bridges—which are three miles apart. I thought this would give us room and avoid some of us being ridden over, for our lot didn't, what you may call, quite "carry a head." Shaking the water from my jacket on the far bank I told my companions they could now nurse their breath, and that they would need it all if they were to do the six miles on to Highfield Wood ; but I also told them that I promised them a kill when they got there. This put heart into them—for we had scarcely tasted a fox that season.

*I felt his backbone go crunch in my jaws*

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Now Highfield Wood we had only visited once—on a hot September morning, when there was no scent. But I had noticed that there was a fat litter of cubs there ; and I had noticed that the covert was cut up by small ditches, and that the cubs made use of these ditches. I saw my chance. When hounds had entered Highfield they were soon running several of these uneducated and unfit foxes. I nipped off and took up a position where two of the drains crossed. In less time than it takes to tell it I saw a fat first season fox steal up the dry ditch—and almost simultaneously I felt his backbone go crunch in my jaws. Baying loudly I summoned the pack. Then up comes the master and some of the field : " Whoohoop ! " he hollers. " A twelve mile point, if it's an inch. Where are all the crabbers ? Well done, Harkaway ! *Whoohoop leu, leu, leu !* " A few days later the master and some visitors came into kennels : and while they inspected me they talked of both the run and my own prowess. " I wrote about Harkaway's wonderful performance," said the Master. " I wrote to his old huntsman, Joe Rasper. And he says Harkaway is a real good hound and that one thing he can guarantee is that Harkaway never told a lie."

Well, neither had I until that day—but circumstances make the thief and, anyhow, Joe shouldn't have drafted me.

# "You on the Chestnut 'Oss"

"'You 'airdresser on the chestnut 'oss, pray 'old 'ard!' 'Hairdresser! I'm an officer in the 91st Regiment.' 'Then, you hossifer in the 91st Regiment wot looks like an 'airdresser, 'old 'ard!'"

*Handley Cross.*

"HOLD up, horse! What's the matter with you? Hold up! What are you thinking about? I gave a packet for you at Tattersalls last June and you came up with a great character then, but my opinion is that you are a proper brute."

"I will answer, in their order, your two questions," said Topthorne.

"When you ask me 'what's the matter,' I can assure you I *was* a good horse six months ago—for in my last home I was given every chance to be so. I was properly fed, conditioned, turned out, and ridden.

"You must acknowledge that when you first laid eyes on me you thought me a beauty. But look at me now! Last June I was a glorious chestnut, now I am a sickly-looking mealy dun. It's your fusty oats, your mildewed hay that have brought me to this. Your bran is full of maggots, and as for linseed, I forget what it tastes like.

"I sported a lovely mane and tail six months ago. I have no mane now, for they had to hog me to get at the lice: and my tail—my tail looks as if rats had been nibbling at it. But I wouldn't stand behind it all the same. If *you* get within shot of my heels, I wouldn't guarantee what might happen. For the fact is that I myself got the shock of my life, going on to the meet last Monday—when I saw my own reflection in the plate glass window of that draper's shop in Pintown.

"You job me in the mouth when I stumble, and you scold me at the same time—but how can I help it? Look at the state of my feet!

*If* you *get within shot of my heels*

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"I gained a lovely mane and tail six months ago. I have no mane now, for they had to beg me to get at the lice: and my tail—my tail looks as if rats had been nibbling at it. But I wouldn't stand behind it all the same. If you get within shot of my heels, I wouldn't guarantee what might happen. For the fact is that I myself got the shock of my life, going on to the road last Monday—when I saw my own reflection in the plate glass window of that draper's shop in Pintown.

"You jab me in the mouth when I stumble, and you scold me at the same time—but how can I help it? Look at the state of my feet!

If you get within shot of my heels

I only get new shoes when I can pull off the old ones in the sticky clay, and when *that* happens it usually means I have to hunt the day out on bare soles. In addition to that, my saddle has had a broken tree for the last three weeks, and it has dug a place in my back in which you could hide a golf ball. Finally, I've got a burn on my neck the size of a half-crown, where you dropped a smouldering fusee after lighting your cigar as hounds were drawing Rankthorne gorse. And if you want to know *all* that's ' the matter ' with me—three days after you bought me I was turned out on sour land until mid September. The ground was as hard as bricks, I had no tips on my feet, and when the flies began to bother me, I had to gallop about or stand still and be eaten alive.

" You also asked me, ' What I was thinking about ? ' Well, my principal thought is that I will wait for the opportunity to give you such a crashing fall as will in all probability break your ugly neck—unless your new-fangled, patent starched hunting tie holds it together. Then at least there would be an Executor's sale. I don't suppose that in my present condition I should realise a ' pony,' but if only I could get into a good stable once more, I'll be bound I'd change hands at a monkey again before the Season was out."

# Retrospection

" Yearning for the huge excitement which the coming chase would yield
And rejoicing at the cropper which we took the second field."
(*Loseby Hall.*)

I NEVER weary looking back on those halcyon days when Jack Vandeleur and I were up at Cambridge.

Jack was born with a passion for the chase, but whether it was latent in me and was developed by Jack, or whether I became infected by his enthusiasm I shall never quite determine.

Anyhow, what between the C.U.D. (Cambs. University Draghounds), " the Harriers," hunting with the Oakley and the Fitzwilliam and occasional visits to the Vale of Aylesbury to ride after the beautiful Rothschild Staghounds, our classics were sadly neglected. In fact our only studies were Surtees, Beckford, Nimrod, The Druid, Vyner and Whyte Mellville.

But I shall never forget that January day with the Pytchley. A 6 a.m. start and breakfast at Northampton station ; after which—" lusty as eagles "—we called a hansom-cab and drove off to meet our mounts and John Isaacs and his Pytchley bitches. I can still picture in my mind the golden tan Mayoress who later on was the dam of Marquis, a Peterboro' champion.

Jack and I saw them run into their second fox at dusk just below the Hemplow.

We had a long ride back to the stables, and not until we had seen to the comforts of our horses did we begin to think of how we were to reach Cambridge that night.

But we got a train at last and a badly lit third class carriage soon rocked us off to sleep—so fast asleep that we missed changing trains and only woke at dawn to find our carriage in a siding many miles from Cambridge.

Jack's first words were " It's the ' Downing Arms drag ' to-day ! The master is laid up and I'm to carry the horn. I wouldn't miss it for a monkey ! "

So we found another train and caught it. Still in the clothes of yesterday, not a spur strap having been loosened and the Pytchley clay still sticking to our backs, we reached Cambridge just in time to take hounds " on."

Another memorable day was with the Fitzwilliam.

Railing our horses to Huntingdon we drove a tandem on in good style until the leader (" Kitty," as I remember, was her name) turned short round as she shied at a heap of stones, broke our shafts and flung us all into the ditch.

We had but twenty minutes to cover the last four miles (plenty of time ! you motorists would say to-day) but we did it. We did it by taking the harness off both horses, throwing it after the gig into the ditch, and then, vaulting on to our naked horses, we met the Fitzwilliam with reverent punctuality.

At the end of the term we both of us " went down."

I say " went " mark ye !

My lot was cast for the City, while Jack by the following year was Master of hounds.

My business and " pocket " have never allowed me to follow hounds since (except mentally through the columns of *Horse and Hound*), but I have never let a summer pass without visiting Jack and spending most of the time in the Kennel. All of this July afternoon had been spent there looking through the entry while Jack was making his draft, and I had asked him what were the features on which he set most store.

" The first thing I look to," he said, " is their breeding. I try to keep those which come from certain lines of bitches which have helped me bring foxes to hand.

" Conformation comes next : and there the very first thing I look to is their elbow. An elbow ' turned in ' or one ' turned out,' however slight either deviation may be, I give short shrift to—even if the hound is good looking in other respects. And I like a wide flat forearm, not one of the round sort. I pay great attention to these points also when selecting sires.

" Ribs ?—Yes, I like *fairly* well sprung ones, especially the back ribs. But I don't like the ' barrel ' sort. They prevent the shoulders from having free play.

" The back is probably the most important part of all, for every nerve which controls the sinews and movement passes through the spine. Try and get a back with a cushion of muscle on each side of the spinal column. No amount of ' condition ' will do this, it must be bred in them. As to that, I find the back is most hereditary from the sire's side. On the other hand give me shoulders on the dam's side or that of her family.

" If you mate a good-neck-and-shouldered sire to a bitch who is faulty there, you may get a litter who look to have good shoulders—but they will hardly ever really ' go,' and they'll generally be but flat-catchers.

" Hind legs ?—Well you've got me there. They're the hardest thing in the world to pass judgment upon, because a hound alters his stance so ; but I like them well ' let down,' and standing fairly wide behind. Their forelegs I like not too wide apart. Standing behind them you should see the forelegs from between the hind ones.

" A bandy hocked one is *the* worst fault you can have, and I prefer their hind feet slightly pointing outwards if anything.

" If you see a hound with good breechings and good second thighs, you can be pretty certain his hinder part is all right. Those muscles would not be formed if correct movement was absent. In fact if I had to choose a hound and could look at but two parts of him, I would first look at his elbow and then at his breechings. If the elbow is right

*Flung us all into the ditch*

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"Hind legs?—Well you've got me there. They're the hardest thing in the world to pass judgment upon, because a hound alters his action so; but I like them well 'let down,' and standing fairly wide behind. Their hocks I like not too wide apart. Standing behind [illegible] you should see the hocklegs from between the hind ones.

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it's pretty certain his shoulders will be so, and if his breechings are right there won't be much wrong with his hind action and therefore his back is right.

" Do I like the ' cobby ' sort ?—I prefer a bit of length, a good underline ; if the length comes from a long shoulder and wide hams, the spine itself will not be long. Those sorts move like dolphins at play.

" What about feet ? Jorrocks said ' NO FUT NO 'OSS,' but it is truer still of a hound. Give me a good lean foot with a spring in the knuckles and all four toes looking as if they can do their work—and *all* the toe nails touching the ground together at the first pressure, helping to distribute the weight. All doing their share—instead of the inside and outside toes being but ornaments and the unfortunate two middle toes standing all the racket. That's how toes drop.

" The feet must not be too tight or they will chafe between the toes.

" If you find any hounds wear their front toe nails down to the quick at exercise, then, depend upon it—either their shoulder action is faulty or their pasterns are not flexible enough. The same applies if the hinder nails get badly worn ; it probably means that the hound is dragging his hind legs owing to a weak back ; and you often notice this in hounds who are ' split up.' "

I could have gone on talking hounds for hours longer but by now there was only time to say good-bye to Jack, have one more look at old Wildboy who was responsible for most of the entry, and catch my train. My annual visit had come to an end. In the railway carriage once more—but bound for a dismal London and not for a cheerful Cambridge, of how many years ago ?—I spent my time looking over the young entry list, and thinking of how they would be beginning their second season before ever I saw them again.

The train pulled up and I woke with a start—" It's the Downing Arms Drag to-day and I wouldn't miss it for a monkey ! " But it was only the railway porter, asking if I wanted a taxi.

# Misunderstood

I WAS sold in a draft from where I was bred
To a kennel of lesser renown.
My legs were not absolute straight, some said,
Though others exclaimed, " What a good foxhound's head !
What sense must lie under that crown ! "

The less renowned kennel kept bitches alone,
So they drafted me off to " the Stag."
Two masters already I now have to moan,
And foxhunting also, for Stag is bad tone,
And at best it is only a " rag."

They gave me no chance to show how I " drew,"
Nor tested my nose on the road :
Nor tried me for pace (and I " literally " flew
And could hunt down a fox with the smallest of clue) :
But they treated me worse than a toad.

I fear I turned sulky, I hated the " Stag,"
So once more I was shipped in a box.
This time now, alas, it was off to a Drag,
Which is not a position of which hounds brag,
Since our betters hunt only the fox.

I nearly turned sick at the aniseed's smell,
And on it I ne'er ran a yard ;
So they called me a " waster " and " idler " as well,
And the Master, disgusted, condemns me to H——l :
So this night is the last for your bard.

*I was shipped in a box*

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And could hunt down a fox with the smallest of clue):
But they treated me worse than a toad.

I fear I turned sulky, I hated the "Stag,"
So once more I was shipped in a box.
This time now, alas, it was off to a Drag,
Which is not a position of which hounds brag,
Since our betters hunt only the fox.

I nearly turned sick at the aniseed's smell,
And on it I ne'er ran a yard;
So they called me a "waster" and "idler" as well,
And the Master, disgusted, condemns me to H——l:
So this night is the last for your bard.

# A Man in Grey

I'VE never seen much of the world, for I joined up when I was eighteen and remained several years in Cologne after the war. I had read every old sporting book I could lay hands on, but my present occupation kept me in an office in Manchester, so I knew very few people in the sporting world.

But I had seen *him* scores of times ; in fact, ever since I was old enough to remember anything. Yet he never seemed to alter his appearance . . . *semper idem*. To describe him is difficult for there really is nothing to remark about him. He is of average height and build, clean-shaven, a white collar, a black tie, a black-grey suit without anything about it—just a suit, clean, well pressed and fitting correctly. A black bowler, a neatly rolled umbrella with a crook handle, a pair of dog-skin gloves, neither old nor new. A plain gold cable watch-chain. Laced boots, stout and well blacked. An ordinary raincoat on his arm if it's fine and buttoned up like everyone else's when it's raining. Age anything from 30 to 60.

Should you meet him in London of an afternoon, you will see him with a half-smoked cigar. If you come across him in a railway station or in the suburbs, he will be smoking a straight-stemmed briar. I've passed him in Jermyn Street, both up and down. I often see him while on my way from my rooms in Clarges Street to my club in St. James', and as often see him on my way from my club to my rooms. I have noticed him stepping out of a tailor's shop in Savile Row ; I have seen him walking into a famous saddler's. I met him in front of a well-known bookmaker's. Whether he was about to go in or was coming out I cannot tell. I was alongside of him at Crosbie's when the Duchess of Irvington's famous sapphires were being auctioned. I met him one morning at Victoria Station. I was catching the boat train to Dover.

He was not travelling, for he showed a platform ticket at the gate. I supposed he was seeing a friend off. Who was this man? Each year he interested me more and more. To look at, he might be anything. He could fit into any rôle in life, a stockbroker, a K.C., a yachtsman, a barrister, a trainer, an M.F.H., a financier, a worker or man of leisure, a connoisseur collector, or a big landowner.

It was a Saturday, and wrapped in towels, I was sipping a cocktail after a Turkish bath and, looking round the empty hall, I realised that most people had left London who could do so. Suddenly, a couple of chairs away on my left, I noticed the man in grey. He had had his bath, and was now fully dressed as usual, and reading the *Field*. I determined to find out who he was, even at the risk of a snub. Seeing that he was reading the *Field*, and that we were in the month of September, I led off with "I hear sport has been a bit disappointing in Scotland?"

"Yes," he answered, "the weather has been against it—especially in Argyllshire."

"Oh, you know Argyllshire?" I said. "I wonder if you know Lord Twabroke?"

"No, but I know his son; in fact we travelled down together on last night's mail. He had urgent business that called him to town."

"I suppose you go to Norfolk?" I asked, feeling that this mysterious personage might probably be one of the crack game shots of England.

"I was down there on two occasions the year before last," said he, "but the properties have both since been bought by wealthy Americans."

I ventured further. "Do you ever go abroad?"

"I'm very seldom out of England," replied my new acquaintance. "In fact, the last time I was abroad was when I went to meet the Baron Hookoff's yacht at Gibraltar. I took her back to the Solent."

Now I pictured him an intrepid mariner, who, refusing to leave the ship in rough weather, took her (as only a seaman could) across the Bay of Biscay—with the crew all huddled up sick in the fo'castle. A regular Viking. Took her across the Bay, I felt sure—while the owner, the cowardly Baron, was ' beating it ' in the train-de-luxe, wrapped up in sables, only thinking of the fleshpots of the Carlton Hotel.

I somehow felt that this admirable man must be also a foxhunter : so I added, " The Shires, I expect, appeal to you ? "

" Yes," he said, " I used to go down there a good deal at one time —those were in the days before you were born. My word, they were days ! What studs of hunters ! Nothing like them these days. Why, they bought thousand-guinea hunters like one buys collars ! Such hospitality, too ! Food all down from London, you know. Why, they used even to send for poor old ' Guy ' the whole way from London to Belton, just to shave them. Guy didn't mind it ; told me a good story once how, when he asked Capt. McLavish how much hair lotion he wanted, he said, ' A puncheon.' He worked it out in gallons, and found it would cost £500. So on my advice he sent him a 12s. 6d. bottle instead—which was never paid for. Clothes, bless you, they ordered their boots like sets of ninepins ! Top hats ? I know one hat-maker shot himself—saw he couldn't make enough of them to last up to Christmas (that was when there were ox-rails), and he feared they'd put their orders out with his rival, and it deranged his mind. The worst of the Shires is that not many people remain there for long. But it's a wonderful country—finest pastures in the world. It's the pace that kills."

" You mean their horses can't stick it ? "

" No," said the man in grey ; " it's their pockets."

" I suppose," I returned, " you actually knew Tip Fencer in those days ? Of course, I never even saw him, but my father has often told me that there never was such a topsawyer or such a stud of horses. I

believe he sold his horses one season in January, and went off to a big estate he bought in Peru ; but my father says he has never returned to England and that no one even hears of him—but my father says that he's probably made a lot of money out there by now."

" Yes, I remember him and his horses well. I was rather interested in them ; in fact, I had a lot to do with the sale. But he never went to Peru. Why, I saw him at Chiltown only the other day ; in fact, I gave him a tip—for the sake of old times."

" What horse did you tip him ? " I asked, for since last June I hadn't found a winner, and something told me that the man in grey must be a very astute judge of racing, probably had inside information —perhaps it was even a horse of his own which he had tipped—kept dark since a two-year-old, to bring off a big coup in a ' seller.'

" Oh, it wasn't a *horse*," he answered, " it was a half-a-crown I tipped him. He is a waiter at the Blue Boar nowadays."

I began wondering if my new friend had ever been a Master of Hounds. If so, a celebrated amateur huntsman, I felt sure. He was just the cut for it. That he had probably ranked with Osbaldeston, I had little doubt, and I could almost *see* him blowing his hounds away from Lundy Gorse. So once more I ventured : " Have you ever taken a pack of hounds ? "

" I only actually took one," said he. " That was Sir Harry Scattercash's. I took hounds, horses, saddlery, rugging—the whole establishment, in fact—coaches, buggies, liveries and all. Finest show you ever saw in your life—about fifty thousand pounds' worth. The country bought the pack from me, so ever since they have been known as the Ringside Hounds. They were a rare lot, quite as fast as Sir Harry was himself, but not quite so nippy as her ladyship—for *she* got away to Corsica disguised as an organ-grinder, with her jewellery and all the loose cash, and a lot of the plate inside the organ. But, of course, you are too young to have heard about those times. I was just going to

take Capt. Larker's pack at another time but they got hydrophobia and died. The horses were not his property ; they belonged to Hock, the dealer, at Bramley. So he took them."

He rose, looked at his watch, and, nodding to me, went off. I had found that the more I conversed with this man, the more intense became my admiration for him. It almost amounted to hero-worship. Here was the typical Englishman of the seventies, to the manner born—a dead shot, an intrepid yachtsman, a famous amateur huntsman, a turfite—in fact, a sort of cosmopolitan idol who would, I imagined, be equally as at home at Longchamps or Auteuil as he would at Epsom or Sandown, Monte Carlo or Cowes. A man greeted on each side of the Channel with cordiality and respect by everybody who was anybody. It had been a great privilege for me to meet this man, and I firmly intended to discover his name.

I thought I would blow in and see Tom Plater. He had seemed to me for the past year to be heading for disaster. No idea of money whatsoever, and I fully expected that now, after Ascot, he'd be down and out. But Tom was a marvel. There were his rooms, No. 36, best rooms in the street—and there was his two-seater Hispano outside the door.

" Hallo, Tom ! " I shouted, as I banged open the door—and, there by the wall, talking to Tom, stood the Man in Grey.

" It's all right, old boy, come in ! " said Tom ; " don't mind that bloke. It's only a DUN ! "

When I went back, half an hour later—Tom was in : but the Man in Grey was no longer there . . . and Tom's two-seater Hispano was no longer outside the door.

# The Scapegoat

*YOU can't beat hunting in Bleekshire. There's a good Master, a keen huntsman, a good working pack, and nearly every covert holds a litter and is open to hounds throughout the year.* That is what Monty Trigger had been told, and he had found it to be true. Now, at the end of his first season, he congratulated himself on his own good sense in coming to hunt there —where he liked almost everybody and almost everybody seemed to like him.

" Almost " everybody seemed to like him. But unfortunately " almost " didn't seem to include the Master. The Master seemed to have a down on him ; often Monty would get the rough side of his tongue when others (who richly deserved it) escaped all attention. It was one night at Foxholme (the hunting box of Sir Verry Kean) that Monty found himself sitting on the " Port side " of the M.F.H. Giving the decanter a " fair wind " he decided that this was a propitious moment to thaw the ice. He told the Master how much he had enjoyed the season's sport : he praised the hounds : and he said he hoped he would be able to come up next season, to throw in his lot with the Bleekshire once more.

" I might as well get it off my chest," said the M.F.H. " While I was engaging a keeper last November," he began, looking gravely down into his glass, " I found that he had been an underkeeper in Eastshire, at Shotover Park—Sir Arquebus Trigger's—who is your father, I have since heard. Now my old friend Chivvy Fox was Master of the Eastshire Hounds, and my interest in his prospects for the season prompted me to ask some questions. The keeper replied that, so far as Shotover was concerned, the stock of foxes certainly would be at least equal to the demand—for Sir Arquebus Trigger never permitted cub-hunting, and in fact didn't allow hounds to draw or even run into his coverts until

nearly February, for fear of disturbing the game. He added that they didn't like to have hounds there late in the year either—because it disturbed the hen pheasants.

" Now, that worked out that Sir Arquebus's coverts were open to hounds for some six weeks only of the season. Well, I don't mind avowing to you that this fairly got my goat. Here were you enjoying our good sport—which is chiefly good because of the way in which our covert-owners support us—and all the time your father's coverts— . . . Well, it seemed to me outrageous. Why, down here, there is not a man would fix a shoot without first consulting the interests of the Hunt. Basil Morne, for example (who rears probably more birds even than Sir Arquebus), wrote me last September to come again and cub-hunt as soon as it suited me, telling me it would stir up his birds, and that he hated shooting tame ones.

" I may as well tell you that if Chivvy Fox himself had written me of your father's attitude towards hunting I should have had no choice but to ask you to remove yourself and your horses to another shire. You can also take it from me that if Sir Verry knew about this you would not be sipping his port under the hospitable roof of Foxholme. He holds very special views on the subject and his motto is ' *Fox et praeterea nihil.*'

" It is certain that if it became known in Bleekshire about your ' paternal pheasants,' you would get a good many snubs. I know at least six fellows who, if they knew it, wouldn't let you ride inside their coverts. And if the subalterns who are stopping here at Foxholme to-night got wind of it they might wish to decorate that smart pink coat you are wearing with feathers before the morning. Squeak Subden (the one sitting there on Sir Verry's left) is a terror to rag. Last season he painted a large fox in ink on the back of the unfortunate Marquis de Fusil's pink coat. The Marquis had told someone about a fine fox he had once shot. As a matter of fact, it appeared, later on, that the Marquis had shot the fox in Alaska. And so Squeak apologised.

"Well, perhaps it is hard lines to visit the sins of the fathers on the children—so I'll compromise. If I hear from Chivvy next September that he has found several strong litters in the Shotover coverts I shall be delighted to see you back next season in Bleekshire—savvy? I don't wish to make you a scapegoat. But do you remember Whyte-Melville's lines?

'Come, I'll show you a country that none can surpass
For a flyer to cross, like a bird on the wing,
We have acres of pasture and oceans of grass,
We have game in the autumn and cubs in the spring.'"

# The Biter Bit

THE fact that Capt. Chutney was taking over the South Meadshire at the end of the season, uniting " North " and " South " into one country—that was a fact which did not tend to foster in Blowhard the friendly feeling which is so desirable among neighbours.

Blowhard had hunted the " S.M." for twenty-two seasons, while the Captain had been in office for but three ; his only previous experience being that of hunting jackals with a bobbery pack somewhere out East. It may have been an inferiority feeling which made him resent Blowhard's reminders to him on all possible occasions of his own seniority as a huntsman. Blowhard, on the other hand, was somewhat unreasonable in resenting any allusions to the Captain's prowess in crossing the country. When this gallant amateur huntsman once swam the flooded Dribble, for example—Blowhard's sole comment was that there was a well-known ford some three fields off, and that " some people seemed to have no eye for a country." It may be, therefore, that there was something a little personal about Blowhard's determination to finish the Season with a bigger tally than the Captain's. It is certain that the Captain had not the slightest intention of letting him do so if anything he could do would prevent it. But both packs had now only one more day's hunting before the finish of their season. Each registered, up to date, 29½ brace of foxes killed. The " S.M." were to hold their final meet on the Thursday, while the " N.M." were to ring the curtain down on the Saturday following.

Now, on the Wednesday evening farmer Shearer, who lived just over the boundary in the " S.M." country, called to see the Captain. And he brought with him a fox, which he said was a well-known poultry thief, caught that very morning in his fowl-run. He knew, he said, that there were not many foxes in the Saturday country and

he had wondered if this fox might not come in useful. And the Captain shut up Shearer's fox in an old disused summerhouse, in the grounds. And the Captain thought that even should the fox fail to provide a good run, at any rate his "nose" would bring up his own score to 30 brace and probably enable him just to beat Blowhard's total.

But news travels in hunting countries quite as fast as it is reputed to do in Eastern countries ; and within one hour Blowhard had heard all about it, while drinking a glass of ale at the "Spur and Buckle." He soon determined on a plan to defeat his rival. Going down to Mark Strap's cottage (and Mark had ridden second horse to him for many seasons), "Mark," he said, "you know that to-morrow is to be my last day hunting hounds in this country. Next season the Captain is taking over the 'S.M.,' bringing with him his own staff, so it means that we shall all have to shift. Now, I want you to-morrow to go to the north bank of the Flow, close to the footbridge on Mr. Barleycorn's farm, and wait there on Cockrobin—for it is any odds the fox will cross the river close there. There is no ford for several miles. I shall cross over by the footbridge and then get on Cockrobin—for I'd like to kill my last fox in Meadshire off the old grey's back."

Then Blowhard went on to see his first whipper-in. "Harry," he said, "to-morrow is our last day together in this country. You know I've always played the game honest all the time I've been huntsman here. But to-morrow it's different—don't ask questions, but do as I tell you. Get about a foot of lampwick and put it to-night under the litter in the ferret hutch and see it gets well soaked. While I'm drawing Splashwell Wood, get on to the far side ; then tie the lampwick on to your lash and, dropping your whip, drag it along the ground until you reach the footbridge that crosses the Flow. Then dismount, dragging the lampwick across the bridge and on for another 300 yards on the far side of the river. You'll see Mark there on Cockrobin. Tell him to see

*He made a bee-line for the summerhouse*

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he has my leathers the right length, and then get back on to your horse, throw the lampwick into the river and hold up your cap."

* * * * * * * *

That Thursday saw the biggest field that had been out that season with the "S.M." Nearly all the "N.M." were out, headed by their M.F.H., Capt. Chutney. Away galloped Blowhard from Splashwell Wood and after a field hounds settled down to the line and ran merrily to the river Flow. Here there was a momentary check, but Venus and Vesta hit it off again, and the pack fairly sang to it as they scuttled across the footbridge. Blowhard, dismounting, followed in their wake with a hearty cheer, and coming on to the grass on the other side they ran on at a good pace. Blowhard, while climbing on to the back of his grey favourite, heard shouts of "Where's the nearest ford?" from many of the field as they galloped madly to the left and right, but what pleased him most was the sound of a splash—and the sight of the captain wallowing in the muddy brook with the horse's bridle in his hand. The horse himself (he was pleased to see) was trying to clamber out some distance further down-stream. But Blowhard knew there was no time to waste, so catching hold of his bitches he lifted them three fields on into the road, and starting off with them at a brisk jog-trot, never drew rein until, on reaching the Captain's place, he entered a side gate. Then—galloping across the park, cap in hand, cheering his pack—he made a bee-line for the summerhouse. Whoo-hooping and halloaing, he soon forced open the door—when in rushed the excited pack, making short work of the fox.

"Must save his mask," muttered Blowhard: "maybe the Captain might like it as a *souvenir*."

And riding home along the turnpike, the first rider he met was the Captain.

"Sorry you got such a ducking, sir," he said. "It's a treacherous brook, is the Flow; rotten bad bottom to it. Eh? Yes, it's an old

dog-fox right enough. Recognised him at once. It's that old chicken thief that visited farmer Shearer so often last year. Funny thing . . . in my twenty-two years here as huntsman I never killed a fox in that summerhouse before to-day. And the funny thing is the door and windows were shut. Beats me how the beggar got in. Have you any idea, Captain ? "

And the Biter was indeed bit. For the North Meadshire had a blank day on the Saturday, when Blowhard's tally stood at 30 brace—which was one nose more than the Captain's.

*" To kill his fox full well he knows*
*As well as pace he must have* NOSE."

" TELL me, Face," said Plutocrat, " what is this ballad you are always humming ? "

" My proper name—as you well know," said the old pyed hound, " is Mountain. I am aware that through the snobbery of Jack my name doesn't appear in our list : but Mountain is my name and if you address me by it, I, Mountain, will sing this ballad to you—for my voice is the most melodious of the kennel.

" So hark to me—as you perforce have to do when I am working out a morning drag in the forest, leading all you flat-headed swells up to where your fox lies kennelled. You shall listen to me now as you have to do when I carry the line across greasy fallows, while you all follow me in Indian file, and Jack, cap in hand, sings out ' Forrard to Mountain, Yoooi lad ! ' For though you may drive level with my cheek you are unable even to smell the scent I am proclaiming so loudly—until I pilot you out on to the grass land, so that you may once again be able to hunt along.

" Now for my chantey, the chorus of which I shall first render you, though I don't suppose you will join in it—such a hide-bound lot as you are.

" For Belvoir tan is gallant and bold
On a scent you can cut with a knife breast high,
But to sing on a plough when scent lies cold,
You must look for the old Blue Pye !

" What ? Well, you asked for it ! I knew you wouldn't like it ! That's why I usually only hum it. But I shall sing it if I please. You

will not dare to set upon me, for my voice could bring into this yard every man Jack of the establishment, and they would slip it into you for worrying me.

"I've a very good mind to do so, too! I've never quite forgiven you all for the shabby trick you played upon me the very first day on which I was out with you. It was just because you were jealous. The hunt staff might have been forgiven for knowing very little about me. My late master had laconically described me as 'a good foxhound': the hunt staff were not to know that what the old Squire termed a 'good' foxhound, had, above all, a good nose. I have seen him draft many an otherwise good hound—and many a comely one, too—mumbling as he did so, 'no nose, no nose!' In my two seasons *here* I have seen many drafted. Some for being riotous, some for skirting, some for being over-silent, others for a weak constitution, and many for not going fast enough—*but not a single one for lack of nose*. Yet my honest opinion is that, except for myself, there is not a really good nose in the whole kennel.

"Well, to return to the shabby trick you played on me my first day here. Scent was failing, and our fox a long way ahead (yet I have seen the Squire with my old lot work up to and kill many a fox who had even more in his favour). I grant you were short of blood—but so was I. We had run into a large preserve of hares which is always sickening. I was puzzling the line out and occasionally speaking to it in good plain English (though that young prig Grammatic does say I've got a Welsh accent). But all of you gave up; you wouldn't back me and you returned to your huntsman, the real reason being that you knew how inferior your noses were to mine. You would not take the trouble to try any more. The hunt finished with Jack saying, 'I don't think it's right!' and me receiving a rate—with an accompaniment, too! As to that, I always forgive *men* for their mistakes: what can they possibly know about hunting, having no noses? Their noses are but useless

*Jack sings out "Forrard to Mountain, Yoooi lad!"*

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Jack sings out "Forrard to Mountain.
Good lad!"

organs, their only use seemingly being to carry spectacles. But let me warn you hounds that unless you use your noses a little more they will become as unsensitive as a man's, solely from disuse.

" And let me remind you that before the close of the month I was getting ' my own back.' For the first fortnight scent served so well that anything could have hunted a fox. It was during this fortnight that we had that blazing half-hour on a piping scent, rolling him over in the open (I have always suspected Pellets, the Mugmarsh keeper, of having perfumed that fox). Right through, as I will admit, Raceaway was top hound—but don't you forget that I myself was never out of the first five couples. Raceaway stands a good 25 in., is built like a Derby winner, and is but a two-season hunter ; and it was in the vale, all on grass, with a straight running fox and up the wind all the way. Any daft-headed long-dog could have done it as well—and yet that night you all kept rubbing Raceaway's performance into me and called me a slow top !

" But before the end of the month I had my chance. Scent was catchy and the ploughs were drying up, yet it was real hunting. Raceaway would tear off wildly with the rest of you, and when the fox turned would overrun the line and not even notice where we had last had it, so little attention had been applied by any of you to real hunting. At such times I would come up on the line and, taking it right through you all, would shout ' Peep-bo ! ' as I passed under Raceaway's nose. (Oh, how I detested that dog ! And how jealous it made him run, those days.) Soon after you would check again—very often when the fox had only jumped into the furrow alongside of the one you were in. Up I would come and put you right at once, throwing my tongue with our peculiar double ring which the old Squire had got into most of his pack through Ringwood. Then as I passed Raceaway I would shout ' Peep-bo to you again ! Why don't you blow your nose ? ' And getting you on to better scenting ground, I would set the tambourine

once more a-rollin'. If I had not been there to help you, you would be still staring about in that ploughed field—waiting for your Master to get you out of it with the help of whippers-in. Even so, he would never have got your heads down again. For as I said before, what can men know about hunting, when they've got no noses ?

" And I shall not forget in a hurry that other hunt—from Deepdean after a dark-coloured fox. It was a hot day in March ; the land was dry and scent getting worse as we went along. We had been at it one hour. And in spite of your spurts and checks I had managed to stick to the line, so (though we never went what you call a ' cracker ') there was no time wasted—which is really what counts. Up we worked to him on Oakefield Moor, and off the pack went in view, Raceaway at head. The fox jumped over a wall ; on went the pack, but breaking view they stood still, staring about them like a party of astronomers. Now, the moment I topped the wall I realised I couldn't smell the fox ahead, *so I at once knew he must have turned short under*—as a beaten fox with a pack at his brush always does. I couldn't wind him on the right, from where the wind was blowing, so I knew he must have turned *down* the wind, to the left of us. In less time than I can say I turned in the air as I topped the wall, and landing on him I had him. The pack came racing back headed by Raceaway. ' *Peep-bo to you !* ' said I to Raceaway, ' and this time with knobs on ! ' "

* * * * * * * *

" There is not a doubt, Jack," said the Master as he was walking hounds out one afternoon in the summer, " I have never seen such sport with these hounds as they showed us last season. We didn't lose foxes after a few fields as we so often used to do before ; and frequently with indifferent scents we handled our fox after long and patient hunting, often hanging on to the line by ' a thread.' "

" I was only saying that to Will last Sunday night, sir."

" Now do you think that that delicate yet powerful ' thread ' could have been Mountain's nose by any chance? There's another thing. I noticed, also, an improvement somehow in the work of the pack after that lovely young Raceaway died from that terrible bite he got one night in the kennel. I have often wondered which of the hounds it was that did it."

# La Nuit Porte Conseil

IT was New Year's Eve. We had had the run of the season that day, yet despite a good dinner, good wine, cheery companions, not forgetting mince pies and plum pudding, I couldn't shake off the disappointment of not having handled my fox.

We had come along with a serving scent for about sixteen miles—in one hour and forty minutes over the cream of Hardshire, the actual point being a good nine. On entering Stagmore Park our fox had been seen in a sorry plight, barely three minutes ahead. Carrying a good head into the park, hounds were suddenly brought to a check among the deer. Every likely cast was made in vain, and what had become of this fox remained a mystery to all. I had no difficulty in recognising him. He was a well-known " old customer," dark of colour, without any white even at the tip of his rather stumpy brush. High on the leg, he looked more like the hill foxes than those of our vale.

My guests had gone and I was dozing before my study fire with a pipe in my mouth, still puzzling over what had become of that fox, when suddenly I saw the " old customer " curled up in a chair before me, his bright eyes looking straight into mine from behind his brush ! In the circumstances it seemed the most natural thing in the world to discuss the day's sport with my *vis a vis* and I prayed him tell me how it was that he was able to blink us, as he certainly had done in Stagmore Park, and to what foolish mistake of mine he had owed his brush that day.

" You made one very foolish mistake," he snapped, " but it was *not* to-day, but one morning of last August. Do you remember going to Stagmore Park to show hounds the deer ? The bracken was high and into it your hounds suddenly broke away, running with a great cry while the deer kept galloping before them in the bracken. When you got hold of hounds at last, you had them rated and over

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severely punished. Fearing that your hounds were unsteady you afterwards made repeated morning visits to the deer, and overdid the 'Ware Haunch!' business. So much so, that at the sight or scent of deer or even at the word 'Haunch' down would drop every stern. They had become a broken spirited pack. Now on that August morning it was *me* they had winded, and it was on me that they broke away. It was difficult for you to see what they were doing in the high bracken, and the deer running before them deceived you. But you might have recognised old Regulus's note at head and known it could only possibly be 'fox' if *he* was there. When I reached the park to-day I was 'whacked to the wide.' I knew Mark had stopped the earths, the quarry holes were three miles distant, and I could never reach them. But one ruse only was left to me—to get amongst the deer and hope that your hounds had not forgotten their wrongful punishment and the severe rating of six months ago. So I kept on moving on with the deer throughout the woods.

"You must have seen how at the first sight of the running deer hounds ceased to drive and how some of them, almost immediately afterwards, began to feather on my line. Billy Tompkins, your second whipper-in, cracking his thong gave them a cautionary 'Ware 'aunch! wild 'uns!'—which put the lid on the whole show. It was U.P. when your old hounds came back to your horse. Should you have crossed my line at that time they would never have hit it off again, for their heads were up, their attention distracted—they were troubled. I don't mind telling you these secrets as I am leaving your country and returning to my unhunted mountains. I am not afraid of the keepers up there, I am too conversant with their tricks to get caught in their traps or pick up their baits. I kill my own meat, no rissoles, thank you very much! You notice I have no tag to my brush? I lost that my first winter in a steel trap. It was a close shave, but no closer than that which I had to-day."

"Tell me more," I said. "There is so much I want to learn that you could tell!" As I spoke my pipe dropped on the hearth. I woke up with a start. My visitor had gone! I looked at the clock and saw that it was New Year's Day. So I made one resolution for the New Year—to give Billy Tompkins a good talking to and a caution against his incessant rating—and to trust my hounds.

# A.D. 3000

IN that age it began to be realised that sport with most packs had decidedly and seriously deteriorated—a point of as much as two miles being now quite exceptional.

Many reasons were ascribed for this and the sporting Press was inundated with letters, but the general opinion was that hounds had become *too good* . . . . owing to Peterborough Shows—an opinion which was in curious contrast with that of the twentieth century. It was decided that to cope with the super-excellence of the hound it was now essential to improve the type of fox.

A committee elected to deal with the improvement of foxes held a meeting at Messrs. Lyons's, which had for long been the favourite rendezvous of the M.F.H. Association. It was then and there decided that the size of foxes should be increased, as well as their bone, and a lengthening of both head and legs was recommended. A Mr. Peltstein, who was on the committee at his own request and in an advisory capacity, was anxious to see both fur and brushes lengthened considerably. This proposal was not carried, and on it being suggested that Mr. Peltstein's motives were not entirely disinterested, he left the Committee without stopping to resign.

A Stud Book was started without delay. Only registered foxes were in future to be allowed in recognised countries ; foxes were to be earmarked in accordance with their stud book number ; a large sum was voted for the encouragement of fox shows during the summer months ; M.F.H.'s were to be asked to send in the stud-book number of all foxes who gave a good run.

And, in spite of all this, sport became, if anything, worse. Foxes, although handsomer, seemed to be slower. November was disastrous —in so much as in that month all of the three great champion prize-

winners ignominiously yielded their brushes. Champion Ranksborough Charlie, No. 106, Vol. I, p. 19, was caught in the very first field, because the gate was shut. Huntsmen of the best packs began to give their hounds pudding of a morning, so as to give the foxes a chance ; and it was said that Frank Frostem had to give his flying bitches a dumpling apiece at 2 p.m. if he wanted an afternoon fox to stand up for thirty minutes.

The outlook seemed indeed gloomy, when, early in December, the Middleshire electrified the whole hunting world by scoring a really great hunt with a point of $14\frac{1}{2}$ miles. The fox took refuge in an outhouse and saved his brush, for the owner (who was the twenty-third in direct descent from an anti-foxhunting peeress) locked him in with her fair fingers and ordered the hounds away from her villa. The Master, however, bribing her Robot air-mechanic with nuts (German steel ones), managed to recover the fox alive and sent it up to the Association as a sample of the " correct type." But the arrival of the Middleshire fox caused the greatest consternation at Lyons's. It was found that the Middleshire fox *was not a stud-book fox at all.*

The fox not being a stud-book one it was, of course, inconceivable that he should be bred from. The public, thirsting for sport, urged that so magnificent a specimen of his race should be sent to the stud, but the committee decided that it was more far-seeing to send him to the lethal chamber. It had been proved to their satisfaction that he came from a hill-country hunted by a Mr. David Cwmllgfrch Gwm Jones, who never registered his foxes (or, for that matter, his hounds).

And so matters continued. The sporting Press became crowded with letters on the harm that Fox Shows were doing to sport, and soon the big dailies took up the matter, condemning the type of the present-day fox and everyone concerned with it. How absurd it was, they said, that Mr. David Cwmllgfrch Gwm Jones's fox should not have been freely bred from—instead of hanging round the neck of the olive-

*Stud-book foxes*

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The outlook seemed indeed gloomy, when, early in December, the Middleshire electrified the whole hunting world by scoring a really great hunt with a point of 14½ miles. The fox took refuge in an outhouse and saved his brush, for the owner (who was the twenty-third in direct descent from an anti-foxhunting peeress) locked him in with her hair fingers and ordered the hounds away from her villa. The Master, however, bribing her Robot air-mechanic with nuts (German steel ones), managed to recover the fox alive and sent it up to the Association as a sample of the "correct type." But the arrival of the Middleshire fox caused the greatest consternation at Lyons's. It was found that the Middleshire fox *was not a stud-book fox at all.*

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skinned Mrs. Peltstein (with a pair of glass beads in its head), as it was now doing.

It was eventually decided to ask the great spook-merchant Professor Palmoil to get in touch with Squire Osbaldeston and ask him for advice on the matter. The Squire, speaking with an American accent, said that he regretted that he had lost all touch with English hunting, for he had been so fascinated by reading Mr. Joseph Thomas's interesting book on American hunting that he now spent all his time hunting " reds " and " greys " in Virginia. The only good old English custom he had never forgotten, he said, was that of saying " Good-night, everybody ! Good-night ! "

# The Foxhound's Prayer

CHERISH us for our courage
Instead of for our looks :
Look on us more as comrades,
And less as picture books.
Breed to the strains that serve you
The best throughout the chase ;
Remember that your stewardship
Spells trustee to our race.

The duty now before you
Is not to " mess us up,"
And not go running riot
To gain some silver cup.
Condition us and feed us
As carefully as you know,
So that no fox, however stout,
Can ever make us blow.

If roads be rough, or stony,
We'll pick and choose our tracks ;
Don't let your eager servants
Drive us with their whip-cracks,
Let us lap a drop of water
When we have caught your fox ;
And, when grown old in serving you,
Don't leave us on the rocks.

Then, if you will but watch us
Until we're beat at last,

When handle us you have to,
You'll make a brilliant cast !
Your fame will spread as huntsman,
Your praise will go the rounds ;
The reason being that we are
A clinking pack of hounds !

And don't distract us, master,
When threading out a line.
Mistake no foxhound's challenge
For silly puppy's whine.
Your steaming horse keep from us,
Or we can't feel the scent ;
If to a holloa you should lift,
Show us which way he went.

You need but treat us kindly,
And we will work for you.
Much more can we do for you,
Than you could ever do.
We'll fairly catch your foxes
If you'll but trust in us ;
So should we for an instant check,
Don't fly into a fuss.

And don't think " Man's a hunter ! "
It's strictly a hound's game.
Hunters we are by birthright ;
You are but one in name.
But if you never cheat us,
And always treat us well,
We'll hunt your fox " from Hanover,
Into the depths of H——alifax ! "

We'll fly straight to your holloa
Or notes upon the horn.
The field will say, " By Jingo,
The finest huntsman born ! "
We tell you this in secret
And whispers (not above) ;
It's but our way of thanking you,
And showing you our love.

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY ROBERT MACLEHOSE AND CO. LTD.
THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, GLASGOW

10/2/19